

UNIT 1 Basic Concepts

Blog It Out

Yanli's Blog

It's All About Business Writing

So, this is what my first job will be—after all these years of study, all the homework assignments and one test after another!?

To be exact, it's not my real job yet. It's just what I'm supposed to do for the two-month internship before graduation. Still, I felt somewhat strange when I was told that my work will be something about business writing, besides all the office chores, of course!

I had thought I would have chances to use my spoken English in this foreign trade company. But WRITING, and BUSINESS writing, instead of everything else!!! What can I get from writing? Not the fun, to be sure, that I can get from business interpreting!

I had thrown my business writing textbook somewhere in my dorm after the final test last term. All I can remember about this course is just endless homework, which I could never finish without the samples in the textbook. Yes, samples—as long as I can get some samples, I think I can manage. But where is my textbook???

Before I could go back to my dorm to get the books, I had to face a real test, not in the classroom, but in the office! Ms. Shawn, the office secretary and my supervisor during my intership, asked me to write a notice for her telling everyone in the General Office that there is a meeting at 2:00 in Room 302 this afternoon.

I grabbed a marker and walked to the white board on the wall. I tried to control my shaking fingers and kept telling myself, "It's nothing, just a simple notice." One minute later, I scribbled something like this:

Please come to Room 302 at 2:00. There is a meeting.

I came back to my seat without looking at others.

About Me
 Name: Liu Yanli
 Location:
 Shenzhen, China

Email

Photo Album

Links

Posted by Liu Yanli on March 1, 2006 | [Permalink](#) | [TrackBack \(10\)](#)

Listen to Doctor English

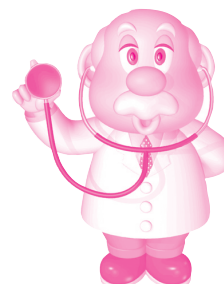
It seems that everyone can make a writer nowadays, at least online. Ms. Liu puts in her blogs some details about her life, as keeping a diary. But unlike a diary, a blog is online for other people to read and respond. In this sense, it is one of the healthy ways of communication in the age of information. We do need to communicate with each other, don't we?

I feel sorry that Ms. Liu seems a little unhappy about her work assignment as an office aide. It may be true for some students that typing on a lifeless computer or writing on stationery is never as enjoyable as talking in a foreign trade negotiation. You don't easily get noticed by people, at least not noticed face to face, so to speak. But the importance of business writing for a company can never be underestimated. In fact, a professionally written business letter, for example, can be just as essential to a business deal as, if not more important than, a good business talk.

Ms. Liu has certainly made her point about samples. But business writing is never just about samples. She may manage her work for a while with the help of samples. For better work in the long run, I strongly suggest that she recover her textbook and review it by asking herself, in the first place, the following questions:

1. Do I remember what business writing is all about?
2. Do I know all the common types of business writing without checking with the samples?

As for writing a notice, it does seem like an easy job, at least in this case, telling everyone to go to a meeting in a short sentence. However, a notice sometimes requires more specific information, and it deserves more than just a line to give details. For example, a notice written to inform customers or the general public about an updated return (退货) policy requires more than one sentence to explain the changes. Apparently, the length of a note varies according to the purpose of writing.



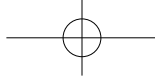
Try It Yourself

Situation

You work at Yanjing International Hotel (2 Longtan Road, Chongwen District, Beijing). The manager is Mr. David Brown. You suggest to him that it would be a good idea to stress some aspects of security in a notice to be put in all hotel rooms. He reads your notes and asks you to write a notice in his name.

Here are your notes:

1. Lock your rooms when you go out for we cannot take full responsibility for thefts or items lost/damaged.



2. If you have anything valuable or important, leave it at reception. We will lock them away for you in our safe.
3. Front doors are locked at 11 o'clock at night. If you forget your key, please ring the bell at the right of the front door.

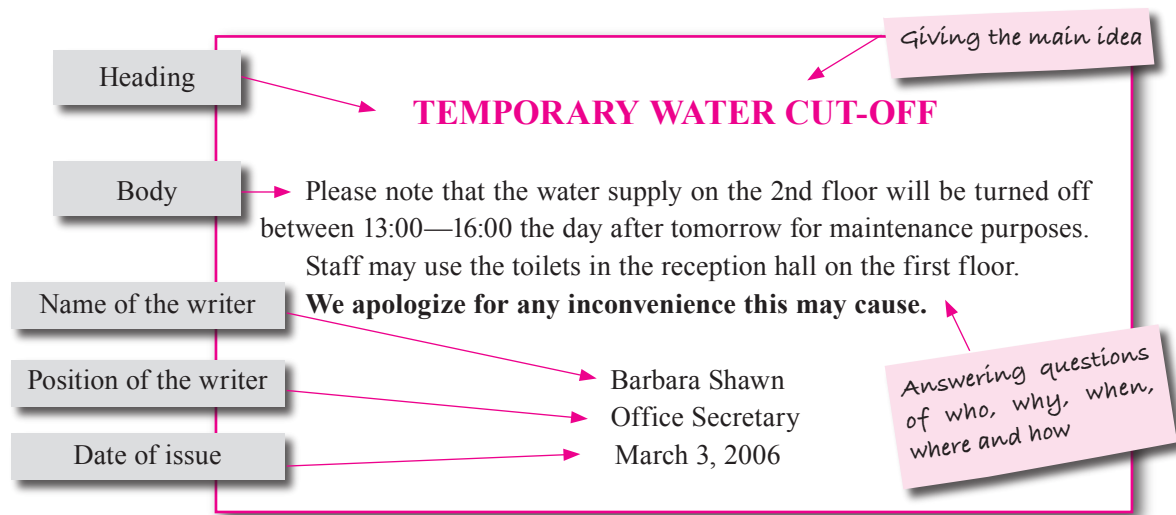
Step 1: Preparing

Directions: Choose the best option(s) to complete the statement(s) and answer the question(s).

1. What questions will you ask yourself before actually writing a business document?
 - A. What reference books do I have?
 - B. Who will read my writing?
 - C. What are the requirements by the boss?
 - D. Do I have a computer?
2. Mr. David Brown asked you to write this notice in order to _____.
 - A. publicize a social event
 - B. inform staff of instructions
 - C. inform changes of a plan
 - D. remind customers of security
3. Who will read this notice?
 - A. The public.
 - B. The staff of the hotel.
 - C. The clients of the hotel.
 - D. The security guards of the hotel.
4. The tone of this notice should be _____.
 - A. serious
 - B. courteous
 - C. businesslike
 - D. personal

Step 2: Formatting

Directions: Read the following sample and answer the questions.



1. Who is the expected reader of the notice?
2. What is the purpose of the notice?
3. What are the details of the event (place, date and time)?

Step 3: Organizing

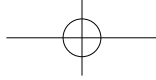
Directions: Read the following notice and make improvements.

BE CAREFUL WITH YOUR GOODS

Please lock your rooms when you go out. Anything valuable or important put it in the safe at Reception. We think you should be happy to stay at Yanjing International Hotel. We don't want you worried about things being stolen, lost or damaged.

We lock up at 11 at night. Take your key with you. If you don't, ring the bell. We will let you in.

Yanjing International Hotel



Step 4: Drafting

Directions: Write a notice according to the situation given at the beginning of **Try It Yourself**.

Refer to the following tips if necessary.

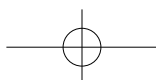
1. Make an eye-catching heading briefly stating the subject matter of the notice.
2. Use simple and concise words all through the notice.
3. Use complete sentences for the body.
4. Leave spaces between headings and separate parts consistently.
5. Where necessary, use styles such as capitals, bold, italics or underlining to emphasize or distinguish some information.
6. Make the notice as brief as possible.
7. If a notice is to be put in bulletin board, it should be presented in fully-blocked display; besides, the writer's signature is required.



Step 5: Revising

Directions: Check the following boxes according to what you have finished above.

1. Have I completed the task?
2. Is the layout correct?
3. Is the heading brief and clear?
4. Is the body presented in complete sentences and short paragraphs?
5. Have I remembered to add Mr. David Brown's name and position?
6. Have I included the date?
7. Is all the required information included in the notice?
8. Is the tone courteous?
9. Are all spellings, grammars, punctuations and paragraphing correct?



Read for Reference

What Is Business Writing?

Before we could find an answer to this question, we may sometimes ask ourselves: what is writing, in the first place?

Human beings communicate in verbal (语言的) and nonverbal (非语言的) ways. The former refers to those involving the use of words, either written or spoken. The latter involves the use of facial expressions, gestures, or postures, known as body language in general. Writing happens to be one of the two ways of verbal communication, the other being speaking. Compared with speaking, or other nonverbal means, writing lacks immediate and face-to-face responses. But it has obvious advantages, too. It usually allows people more time to think logically. And it is easier to keep a permanent record of all human activities with a pen before the invention of multimedia. It is, therefore, at least equal to if not better than, speaking in its communicative power.

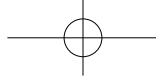
The classification of writing is always an issue in question. In the development of writing studies, a variety of modifiers have been added to the word “writing”, which results in a long list of different and sometimes overlapping subordinate concepts, for example, **creative writing**, **expository writing**, **academic writing**, **professional writing**, **workplace writing**, **technical writing**, etc., and in our case, business writing, all being familiar course names on college curriculums.

The reason for this is the difference in standards of classification. In other words, people look at writing from different points of view. For

example, “creative writing” emphasizes on the unique expressions of human imagination and feelings, which often refers to literary compositions such as novels and poems. In contrast, “expository writing” focuses on logic and facts.

Another effort is made to distinguish “**writing for general purposes**” from “**writing for specific purposes**”. The former usually discusses basic writing skills from the choice of words and sentence patterns, through the development of paragraphs, to the completion of four discourses, namely, narrative, description, exposition and argumentation. The latter is a large family in which business writing is one solid member. Other members include writing for scientific purposes such as a lab report by a scientist after an experiment, writing for technical purposes such as a field trip report by an engineer after a field inspection, or writing for academic purposes such as a graduate thesis by a student.

Put in simple words, business writing is writing for business purposes. In the long history of human beings, writing has been serving different purposes in business. Just take a look at the simple signs in ancient times and the complex contracts in modern days! As purposes differ, so do the written documents for achieving the purposes. Thus we often hear business people talking about emails, memos, minutes, letters, reports, proposals, etc. Among these, **letters**, **memos**, **emails** and **reports** are generally considered as the most fundamental types of business documents based on their frequency and characteristics in business practices.



Some Confusing Terms

When talking about business writing, people use different terms, some of which are similar in meaning, such as content and message, format and layout, genre and category, etc., causing unnecessary inconvenience and even confusion. Based on definitions found in *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, common synonyms are listed as follows:

- **“Content, message”**: The “content” is the topic or matter treated in a written work; the “message” is a communication in writing, in speech, or by signals. Both refer to what is written in the body of the document.
- **“Form, format, layout, style”**: A “form” is an orderly method of arrangement; a “format” is a general plan of organization; a “layout” is the plan or design or arrangement of something laid out; a “style” is a distinctive quality, form, or type of something. Among these, “style” is the most confusing, as it has many uses. Only when used as in the “full block style” of letters is it close in meaning to “format” or “layout” focusing on the

visual arrangement of the document.

- **“Genre, type, category”**: A “genre” is a kind, sort, or a category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content; a “type” is one having qualities of a higher category; a “category” is a division within a system of classification.
- **“Tone, attitude”**: These two words may often replace each other. The “tone” in writing refers to the writer’s attitude toward the reader and the subject of the message. The overall tone of a written message affects the reader just as one’s tone of voice affects the listener in everyday communication.

As the definitions suggest, these terms do overlap to some extent, which may partially explain why they are sometimes used interchangeably within each group in business writing. For their simplicity and high frequency of appearance, “content”, “format”, and “type” are preferred in the rest of this book, though others are also used sometimes.

Notices and Announcements

Generally, there are two main types of notices: notices that are circulated among those who are concerned and notices referred to as announcements, to be placed on the bulletin boards or to be published in the press.

The purpose of a notice or an announcement is often to give information briefly and quickly. The message can be about anything including warnings, apologies, changes of a plan, temporary

address changes and instructions etc. Whatever the purpose, the main aim of a notice is to make it possible for a reader to follow the message quickly and with complete understanding.

An effective notice usually follows three principles: firstly, it states the matter in the first line of the body or in the first paragraph; secondly, it specifies the background, details, explanations or qualifications; finally, if the event

intends to motivate actions, this information should be provided in the last paragraph.

An effective notice also has several characteristics. It answers questions of who, why, when, where, and how. And its information

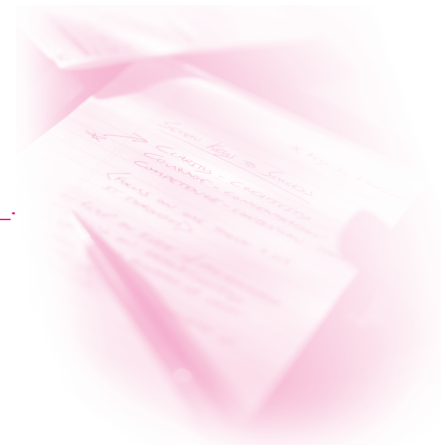
is usually conveyed briefly and smoothly. An effective notice must be businesslike so that readers can recognize their importance. Besides, a good notice must be polite enough so that readers can respond to it more willingly.

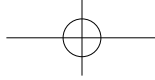
Check Your Progress

Task 1

Directions: Choose the best option(s) to complete the statement(s) and answer the question(s).

1. What is NOT true about writing?
 - A. Writing is a way of verbal communication.
 - B. Writing usually allows people more time to think logically.
 - C. Writing is less important than speaking in its communicative power.
 - D. Writing makes it easier to keep a permanent record of all human activities before the invention of multimedia.
2. Which is NOT the aim of a notice?
 - A. To attract attention and stimulate discussion.
 - B. To give information quickly.
 - C. To deliver a clear message.
 - D. To be very easy to follow and understand.
3. An efficient notice usually includes all the following except _____.
 - A. a heading briefly stating the subject matter
 - B. the name of the person responsible for issuing the notice
 - C. salutation and signature
 - D. the date of issue
4. Which of the following statement(s) is (are) true about a notice?
 - A. There are generally two main types of notices.
 - B. The purpose of a notice or an announcement is to give information briefly and quickly.
 - C. If the notice is to motivate actions, this information can be put in the last paragraph.
 - D. All of the above.





Task 2

Directions: Translate the following sentences.

1. All staff and their family members are welcome.
2. The board of directors will be conducting a meeting at 3 p.m. on Friday, August 4 in room 1131.
3. There has been a change in our clinic service policy which we would like to bring to your attention.
4. 这个星期三的公司例会宣布成立公司研发部。
5. 有关详情请联系张文，电话：2397884。
6. 借此机会感谢大家的配合。

Task 3

Directions: Find out five places to be improved in the following notice.

We are organizing a bus tour to the Botanical Garden on Saturday, 24th September. The bus will depart from the College at 8:30 a.m. and will return around 6 p.m. Drink will be free but no lunch will be served. So please bring food with you. If you would like to join us, please place your name on the sheet on the Notice Board, or telephone me by this Friday.

The Student Union

Task 4

Directions: Turn the following notes into a notice to be put up at the entrance of the University Library.

- How many books can be borrowed at a time? —6.
- For how long? —60 DAYS...will be fined if later.
- Can they be renewed/rebooked? —YES...by calling or asking in person...ONLY IF NOT WANTED BY SOMEONE ELSE.

Task 5

Directions: Write a notice according to the given situation.

Sponsored by the Business Club, Dr. Li Fangxing, expert on learning strategies, will give a lecture on Creative Learning on your campus. You are going to write a notice about the lecture so that your classmates and other potential listeners will know and attend it. Add information where necessary.

Open Your Toolkit

I. Samples

1. Notice of party

Garden Party
Vincent Garden of Ching Pavilion
June 12
2:00 p.m.

All staff and your family members are welcome.
Call Anna Graham at 5551234 for more information.

2. Notice of removal

Warehouse & Service Center Removal Notice

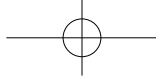
Kindly note that our Warehouse & Service Center will be relocated to the following address with effect from May 1, 2005.

New Address: 3/F, Goldlion Holdings Center,
13-15 Yuen Shun Circuit,
Siu Lek Yuen, Shatin, NT

Telephone numbers & fax numbers remain unchanged.
Thanks for your kind attention and continuous support.

With warmest regards,

Tech Pacific
LEADERS OF TECHNOLOGY DISTRIBUTION



3. Notices of lectures

3-1

COME AND HEAR BILL GATES LECTURE

3:30 p.m. Sunday, March 5th, 2006

in the Peking University Auditorium

Topic: "How to Get Rich and Enjoy It"

Questions allowed afterward

All staff are welcome (bring company ID card)

Sponsored by the Peking University MBA Program

3-2

Lecture

Under the Auspices of the Student Union

A Lecture Will be Given

on *Modern Chinese Literature*

by Prof. Li Xinhui

in the Student's Auditorium

at 6 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 19, 2006

All Are Welcome

Oct. 15, 2006

4. Tour notice

NANFANG TOUR GROUP

Schedule for Tuesday, May 2

8:30 a.m. Meet in the hotel lobby

8:45 a.m. Board bus for the Summer Palace

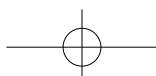
12:00 p.m. Lunch at the Summer Palace

4:00 p.m. Quick stop at the Friendship Store for
last-minute purchases

5:00 p.m. Return to the hotel

Lin Ruifang

Tour Guide



5. Sport event notice

BASKETBALL

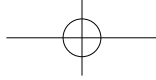
Financial Dept. Vs Human Resources Dept.
 Time: 5:00 p.m., April 20
 Place: Company Gymnasium
 Please apply at the Labor Union for tickets. Admission free.

Labor Union
 April 18, 2006

II. Expressions

1. Basic concepts of writing

Writing		Business writing
creative writing	narrative	email
expository writing	description	memo
academic writing	exposition	letter
professional writing	argumentation	report
workplace writing	Writing for scientific purpose	minutes
technical writing	Writing for technical purpose	
business writing	Writing for academic purpose	
Format	Content	Some confusing terms
capital	spelling	content and message
bold	grammar	form, format, layout and style
italic	punctuation	genre, type and category
underlining	paragraphing	tone and attitude
	tone	



2. Basic concepts of notice

Different parts of a notice	Context style of a notice	Functions of a notice
heading	brief	warning
body	impressive heading	apology
name	simple and concise words	changes of a plan
position	short and complete sentences	temporary address changes
date		instructions

3. Sentence structures

Call somebody at (phone number) for more information.

All ... are welcome.

There has been a change in...

...will be located in our new office building...

Sponsored by...

Under the auspices of...

Please ring me directly on...

There will be a(n) (event) in (place) for (people) on (time).

...is pleased to announce that...

This is to inform you that...

This is to announce...

Call...at (phone number) for details.

III. Key to Try It Yourself

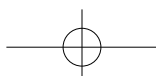
Step 1: Preparing

1. B, C 2. D 3. C 4. B

Step 2: Formatting

Suggested Answers:

- The notice aims at the staff of the company.
- The purpose is to inform the staff that the water supply on the 2nd floor will be temporarily turned off.
- Event: temporary water cut-off
Place: the second floor
Date and Time: 13:00—16:00 on March 5, 2006



Step 3: Organizing

Suggested Answer:

BE CAREFUL WITH YOUR GOODS

We don't want you to worry about things being stolen, lost or damaged. So, please

- lock your rooms when you go out;
- put anything valuable or important at Reception.

We lock up at 11 at night. Please take your key with you. If you don't, please ring the bell.

We hope you will enjoy your stay at Yanjing International Hotel.

Yanjing International Hotel

Step 4: Drafting

Suggested Answer:

KEEP YOUR BELONGINGS SAFE

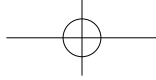
*No one, you or our staff, wants your stay spoiled by anything,
least of all by theft, loss or damage.*

We would like to remind you of the following:

1. When you leave your room, do not forget to lock your door.
2. If you have anything valuable or important, either keep them with you or put them in the safe at Reception.
3. Take the key with you if you think you will be back after 11 o'clock at night. Ring the bell if you do not have your key.

We sincerely hope that you will have a pleasant stay with us. These simple precautions will help to ensure the safety of your belongings. If you want any special advice or to talk over any matter of security, please ring me directly at internal extension number 12333.

David Brown
Manager
Yanjing International Hotel
12 March, 2006



IV. Key to Check Your Progress

Task 1

1. C 2. A 3. C 4. D

Task 2

Suggested Answers:

1. 欢迎各位员工及家人参与。
2. 董事会将于8月4日星期五下午3点在1131室召开会议。
3. 我们的门诊政策有所变动，希望大家注意。
4. This Wednesday's regular meeting announced the establishment of Research and Development Department.
5. Call Zhang Wen at 2397884 for more detailed information.
6. We wish to take this opportunity to thank you for being cooperative.

Task 3

Suggested Answers:

1. There should be a heading stating the subject matter.
2. The name of the person responsible for issuing the notice is not specified.
3. No contact number is provided.
4. The date of issue is not specified.
5. The layout is too dull as no parts of the message stand out.

Task 4

Suggested Answer:

ANSWERS TO THE FREQUENT QUESTIONS

You may

BORROW up to 6 BOOKS at a time

And

KEEP them for 60 DAYS

UNLESS books are wanted by another customer

You may

RENEW them by phone or in person

Please bear in mind that

Fines are charged for overdue books so

Try to get them back by the due date

If you have difficulty in doing so
PHONE US

Michael Miller September 2, 2006
The University Library Telephone: 7555656

Task 5

Suggested Answer:

COME AND LEARN HOW TO LEARN

Dr. Li Fangxing

will lecture on his method of

CREATIVE LEARNING

2:30 p.m., Wednesday, March 5th

Room 301 of Teaching Building 1

Happy Valley College

All students are welcome

no charge

Questions permitted afterward

Sponsored by the Business Club