

Chapter One Basic Knowledge of Business Letter Writing

Section One Introduction of Business Letter Writing

In today's highly developed and toughly competitive society, communication between individuals and groups is becoming increasingly frequent and important. It serves to pass on information, to express ideas or to exchange feelings.

Generally speaking, the function of a business letter is to get or to convey business information, to make or to accept an offer, to deal with various businesses.

The business letter is the principal means used by a business firm to keep in touch with its customers; customers form their impression of the firm from the tone and quality of the letters it sends out. Good quality paper and an attractive letterhead play their part in this, but they are less important than the message they carry.

When we write a letter we enter into personal relationship with our reader. Like us he has feelings and we cannot afford to disregard him. This is a necessary reminder because many people who are warm and friendly by nature become persons of quite another sort when they sit down to write or dictate a business letter. They seem to think that business letters call for a special kind of "business English". They forget that they are "holding a conversation by post" and make use of impersonal constructions that produce a cold and aloof tone. They prefer to write, "Your letter has been received" or "We are in receipt of your letter" rather than "We have received your letter", and "Your complaint is being looked into" rather than "We are looking into your complaint". Then how to write an effective business letter?

All business letters have two main functions. One is to ask for and give a reply to an enquiry, offer, order or complaint. The other one is to keep a record of all the important facts for ready reference. An effective business letter will say what the writer wants it to say clearly and simply. It should be precise, straightforward, relevant and action-centered. It should also be written in a friendly, formal style using plain language. Thus, in order to communicate effectively, you should ensure that the letters portray you as approachable, caring, effective and professional. In addition, you should be very familiar with the established layout and practice of business letters. There are three styles of business communication: the fully-blocked style, the indented style and the semi-

blocked style. The fully-blocked style with open punctuation is the most popular method of display for business letters, because it is considered to be businesslike, simple and professional.

The whole secret of good business letter writing is to write simply, in an easy and natural way—like one friendly human being talking to another, to make your letters then sound as much as possible like good conversation. You wouldn't say on the phone "We regret to inform you that the goods cannot be delivered today". You would say "I am sorry we cannot deliver the goods today", so why not say it when you write a letter? In order to write a good and effective business letter we have to remember some important writing skills.

Requirements to the Writer

If a business letter is to achieve its purpose, the writer should have:

- (1) a good command of standard English;
- (2) knowledge of business theory and practice;
- (3) knowledge of technical terms;
- (4) knowledge of psychology;
- (5) skills in salesmanship.

The business letter can tell readers a lot about the writer and the writer's company. A business letter that is neat, easy to read, and presents a professional image will leave a good impression on the reader. Such a letter helps the writer as much as the reader, and will probably mean an earlier reply. In today's global market place, the reader's first impression often comes from the appearance of the documents and the quality of the paper. So you should pay some attention to the paper quality, the paper color, the paper size and margins. Firstly, never use paper that is too flimsy. Secondly, white is the standard color for business purposes, although light colors such as gray and ivory are sometimes used. Thirdly, the size of papers varies slightly from country to country. In the United States, the standard paper size for business documents is 8.5 by 11 inches. Last but not least, the document is to be centered in the page, leaving at least one-inch margins all around. We can use word-processing software to achieve the balance by defining the format.

This chapter is intended to develop skills in writing good business letters. It contains guidelines on developing personal writing style, using appropriate tone and composing effective communications in modern business language.

When writing emails concerning e-business, features of Cross-Border E-Commerce should also be noted in the digital commerce era.

Network is a medium body with no boundary, sharing the characteristics of globalization and decentralization. Cross-border e-commerce, attached to the network, also has the characteristics of the globalization and decentralization. E-commerce, compared with the traditional way of trade, boasts its important feature: a borderless trade, eliminating the geographical factors brought by the traditional exchanges. Internet users do convey products, especially high value-added products,



and services to the market without crossing borders. Chinese citizens should vigorously develop a healthy and progressive network culture, carry forward the main theme, stimulate positive energy, vigorously cultivate and practice socialist core values, and earnestly safeguard China's ideological and cultural security on the Internet.

The development of the network promotes the transmission of digital products and services. And digital transmission is done through different types of media, such as data, voices and images in the global focus of the network environment. Since the media in the network are in the form of computer data code, they are invisible. Digital products and services on the basis of the characteristics of digital transmission activities also have the feature of intangibility, although traditional trade in kind is given priority to the physical objects, in the electronic commerce, intangible products can replace physical objects.

For the network, the transmission speed is irrelevant to geographical distance. Information communication means of traditional trade, such as letter, telegraph, fax, etc., are with a length in different time between the sending and receiving of information. With regard to the information exchange in e-commerce, regardless of the actual distance of time and space, one party sends a message to the other party who receives that information almost at the same time, just like talking face to face in life. Some digital products (such as audio and video products, software, etc.), can also achieve instant settlement, ordering, payment, delivery in a flash.

Electronic commerce mainly takes the way of the paperless operation, which serves as the main characteristic of trade in the form of electronic commerce. In e-commerce, electronic computer communication records files instead of a series of paper trading. Users send or receive electronic information. Now that the electronic information exists in the form of bits and is transmitted, the whole process is realized by the paperless information. Paperlessness brings positive effects in terms of making information transferred without the limitation of paper. However, many specifications of the traditional law are with the standard "paper trades" as the starting point, therefore, paperlessness creates Legal complications, to a certain extent.

Section Two Layout of a Business Letter

There are several acceptable styles for business letter writing. The most popular forms are full-block style, indented style, modified block style and semi-block style with indented paragraphs.

1. Full-block Style

Every line in the full-block style begins at the left margin, and the open style of punctuation has been adopted.



(Letter head)

(Reference Number)

(Date)

(Inside Address)

(Salutation)

(Subject Line)

(Body)

(Closing)

For example:

*GUANGZHOU ELECTRONICS PRODUCTS
IMPORT & EXPORT CORPORATION
11 Beijing Road, Guangzhou
People's Republic of China
Tel: 3456182 Telex: 8371 Guelco Cable: 2284*

*Ref. GEC 9667
June 21, 2024*

*Ocean Electronics Products Import Corp.
130 Clifford Street
LONDON W 1, England*

Dear Sirs,

Re. Chinese Electronics Products

We have obtained your name and address from the London Chamber of Commerce, who has told



us that you wish to import electric goods manufactured in China.

We manufacture electric appliances of the kind illustrated in the enclosed catalogue, which we hope will be of interest to you. Also enclosed for your reference, is our latest price list.

Should you be interested in any of our products, please let us know and we will provide you with a quotation. In the meantime, should you require any further information about either our products or our corporation, please do not hesitate to let us know.

We look forward to hearing from you soon, and to the possibility of doing business with you in the future.

Yours faithfully,

(Signature)

Liu Sheng-feng

Sales Manager

2. Indented Style

The main feature of this style is that each line of the “Inside Name and Address” should be indented 2~3 spaces, and the first line of each paragraph should be indented 3~8 spaces, i.e.

<u>(Letterhead)</u>
<u>(Reference Number)</u>
<u>(Date)</u>
<u>(Inside Address)</u>

<u>(Salutation)</u>
<u>(Body)</u>

<u>(Closing)</u>



For example:

Beijing Textiles Import & Export Corporation
43 Tian An Men Street
Tel: 010-6683812 Telex: 3358711 Cable: 8898

January 30, 2024

Our ref. No...

Your ref. No...

The Pakistan Trading Company,
15, Broad Street,
Karachi, Pakistan

Gentlemen,

We learn from a friend in San Francisco that you are exporting Nylon Bed-sheets and Pillow Cases. There is a steady demand here for the above-mentioned commodities of high quality at moderate prices.

Will you please send us a copy of your catalog, with details of your prices and terms of payment. We should find it most helpful if you could also supply samples of these goods.

Yours faithfully,
BEIJING TEXTILES
IMPORT & EXPORT CORP.
(Signature)
Zhang Daihua
General Manager

3. Modified Block Style

In this style, paragraphs are not indented. The “Date”, “Complementary Close” and “Signature” are aligned slightly past the center of the page.

For example:

MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY



MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38452

December 18, 2023

Mr. Joe Claiborne
Office Manager
Swallows Insurance Company
5983 Maplewood Cove
Memphis, TN 38117

Dear Mr. Claiborne,

Thank you for your interest in our products. In reply to your request, we enclose our illustrated catalogue and a pricelist showing details of our products.
We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

xxx

(Signature)

Binford H. Peebles
Sales Manager

Should you decide to adopt this style, I would recommend that the date and closing line begin at the centre point of the page. They can also move back from the right margin, but some people find this method rather time consuming.

As you may have noticed by now, there is no precise answer as to the best letter style; it is purely a case of personal preference. Each organization chooses its own style, and its employees should follow it.

4. Semi-block Style with Indented Paragraphs

This style is similar to the modified block style with one exception: the first sentence of each paragraph is indented 3~6 spaces.

For example:

GUANGZHOU ELECTRONICS PRODUCTS
IMPORT & EXPORT CORPORATION
11 Beijing Road, Guangzhou, PR China



Tel: 3451672 Telex: 8793 Guelco Cable: 1414

June 26, 2023

Your ref: TBL/xm

Our ref: GEC 9556

*Mr. J. B. Lewis,
Superlus Electronics Ltd,
33 Bedford Square,
London, UK.*

Dear Mr. Lewis,

Your letter of May 22 enquiring about the possibility of importing Chinese-made electronics goods into the United Kingdom has been forwarded to us by the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade in Beijing.

We are a state enterprise keen to expand our foreign trade. As yet, we have no business contacts in the United Kingdom. We would be pleased to consider any business proposals you may have. Enclosed please find our latest illustrated catalogue, price lists, and terms and conditions of sale for your reference.

Should you require further details, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

(Signature)

Wang Qinghe

Export Manager

Encls: As stated

Comments

The above letters are definitely good and decent examples for learners to understand the special formats of business letters. By learning the above letters, we can recognize the basic elements, say, letterhead, reference, date, inside address, attention line, salutation, subject line, body, complimentary close, signature, etc. The authors of the above letters express themselves very clearly, so that the readers can understand their meaning. Other than that, the purpose of the letters can be well demonstrated by means of applying appropriate words in correct sentence structures. All in all, good, straightforward and simple languages are indispensable elements for perfect business letters.



Section Three Structure of Business Letter

The basic structure of a business letter

- Heading/Letterhead (信头)
- Ref. No. (发文编号)
- Date (日期)
- Inside Name and Address (信内名称和地址)
- Salutation (称呼)
- Subject Line (事由标题)
- Body of the Letter (信的正文)
- Complimentary Close (结尾敬语)
- Signature (签名)
- Enclosure Notation (附件)
- Carbon Copy (抄送)
- Postscript (附言)

1. Letterhead

Letterhead, as the first and most obvious part of a company's business letter, has two functions: to identify where the letter comes from, and to form one's impression of the writer's company. A printed letterhead usually contains the writer's company name, address, postcodes, telephone number and telex number, and fax address, etc. The printed letterhead is usually artistically designed and printed in the center or on the left margin at the top of the page.

For example:

- *Richard Thomas Co. Ltd.*
246 Victoria Street
London E C 4, England
Tel.: 01-2377-252 Telex: 9776645
Cable Add. : WEAWEWELL, London
- *Oversea Trading Corporation*
24 Park Avenue
New York, New York 26789
Tel.: 225-2780 Cable Add.: EASTSEA Telex: 222711

When writing on blank paper, only the address should be at the right margin.

2. Date and Reference Number

(1) Date

Every letter should be dated—never send out a letter without a date. The position of the date below the letterhead (either on the right or on the left) depends on the style you decide to use.



Now there are different ways of writing the date:

- *10 August 2019 (British form)*
- *August 10, 2019 (American form)*

It is unwise to abbreviate the name of the month nor show the date in figures like 10/8/2007 or 8/10/2007 as this may cause some confusions, this is because the British and the American do not read the day and the month in the same order. If you are giving information, such as shipping or delivery or appointment date, it is vital that the date should be correct, so it is better to write it out in full.

(2) Reference Number

The reference number is generally used as a useful indication for filing, so it must be easily seen. It is often placed two lines below the letterhead. In some incoming letters you may find it at the end of the letter on left margin, two lines below the signature.

It may consist of a number and/or the initials of the person sending the letter and the initials of the person typing the letter. So, if John's initials will come first, in capital letters, then a bar, then Louise's initials in small letter. The former should be in capital form, while the latter will be in small form. If Louise Brown sends and types the letter, the reference will be LB/lb. The reference number is set out like this: 386 JS/lb or JS /lb 386.

The reference number of the letter under reply should also be included, if any, as it serves as a guideline for filing by the recipient. So, if George Williams sent a letter to John Smith, typed by Grade Peters, the reference on John Smith's reply would like this:

Our ref: 515 GW/gp (in an incoming letter)

Your ref: 386 JS/lb

3. Inside Name and Address, Salutation

(1) Inside Name and Address

The name and address of the receiver is typed at the left-hand margin at least two lines below the date. It appears exactly the same way as on the envelope, in single spacing, with the town in capital letters. It is important to include it in order to facilitate mechanical mail sorting.

When the receiver is a company, the inside name and address should be written as the following:

The Space Engineering Co. Ltd.

32, Duke Street

LONDON N. W.4

England

"Messrs." is the plural of "Mr.", and is used only when the firm is named after one or more persons, e.g. "James, Smith Co.", "Brown & White Brows", etc.

When the receiver is an individual in the company, the person's name should be preceded by the courtesy title Mr., Mrs., Miss or Ms.. If you are not sure whether or not the woman to whom

you are writing is married, use Ms.. This title is now perfectly acceptable, especially in view of the fact that many career women prefer it.

Sometimes, his or her position—Director, Manager, etc. is given in addition to the company's address thus:

Ms. Brown Davis
Sales Manager
The Davis Shoe Co. Ltd.
462 Piccadilly
LONDON, WIN CBE
UK

If the letter is addressed to the company but directed to the attention of an individual, the inside address is written thus:

Richard Thomas Corporation.
150 Gower Street
LONDON W 1
England
Attn: Mr. John Smith, Sales Manager
 (Attn= Attention= for the attention of)
 (2) Salutation

A business letter should always begin with “Dear...”. It should be typed two lines below the address, and should match the name on the envelope and the address. Although the whole name should not be written, e.g. if the person you are writing to is William T. Holmes, his name on the envelope and address will be typed exactly in that way. However you do not write the salutation as “Dear William T. Holmes”. You may write either “Dear Mr. Holmes” if you don't know him very well, or “Dear William” if you do know him. If you haven't been able to discover the name of the person to whom you are writing and you know only the person is a man or a woman, write “Dear Sir” or “Dear Madam”. If you are addressing your letter to the company as a whole, write “Dear Sirs” or “Gentlemen”.

4. Subject Line

This comes two lines below the salutation, either beginning at the left margin or in the centre, depending on the style you are using. The subject line helps the reader to obtain quickly the gist of the letter. It is especially useful if two companies have a lot of correspondence with each other on a variety of subjects, as it immediately tells what the letter is about. It is also useful as a guide for filing. It can begin with or without “Re:” or “Subject:”, but should always denote what the letter is about.

- *Re: Sewing Machines*
- *Subject: Our Contract No.2345. Your L/C No.3456*
- *Sewing Machines*



5. Body of the Letter

The body of a business letter should begin two lines below the subject line, if any, or at least two lines below the salutation if there is no subject line. Business letters should be typed by using single spacing, and two spaces should be left between each paragraph. Do not vary the spacing between paragraphs in order to make sure that your letter is nicely balanced on the pages. Instead, vary the spacing between letterhead and reference number, date and inside address, inside address and salutation, the last line of the body of the letter and complimentary close, complimentary close and typewritten name.

It contains the opening sentence（开头语），the actual message of the letter, and the closing sentence（结束语）. The body of the letter should be carefully planned and paragraphed, with the first paragraph referring to previous correspondence and the last paragraph to future actions or plans, and with only one topic in each paragraph.

When writing the message, it is very important to have the principles of good communication in mind and avoid stereotyped phrases and commercial jargon.

The first sentence, sometimes even the first paragraph, is called the “opening sentence”. There is no set rule to follow in writing the opening sentence. When replying to a letter, its day and reference number should be mentioned as the following:

- *Thank you for your letter 234 GW/gp of September 18...*
- *Many thanks for your letter about...*
- *I must apologize for my delay in answering your kind letter.*
- *In reply to your letter of July 2...*
- *So much has happened since I received your last letter...*

When writing (not replying) a letter to a company, a clear, straightforward sentence should be used to indicate immediately what the letter is about:

- *I have the pleasure to tell you that...*
- *We have begun a new system of manufacture which we feel may be of interest to you...*
- *You were recommended to our company by the Bank of China New York Branch and we wish to...*

The closing sentence is a simple sentence, which stands as a paragraph by itself and brings the letter to a polite close, and is used to sum up the message and to suggest the writer's requirements to the receiver. If, for example, you are trying to get the receiver to do something for you or buy something from you, you may say “We look forward to hearing from you soon”. If you are providing information about a product you hope they will purchase for you, you can say “Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require any further information”, but if you are asking them to send you some information, you wouldn't say this. Instead you could say “We would be grateful if you could send us this information as possible”. Here are other possible ways of ending a letter:

- *If you need further details (particulars, information), please let us know.*



- *Any other particulars required I should be pleased to give you.*
- *Should there be anything else we can do for you, please let us know.*
- *We thank you for this order and hope to receive your repeat orders.*
- *Any early reply would be highly appreciated.*
- *Thank you for your interest in our company (products).*
- *Any further information you can provide will be appreciated.*
- *We would be very grateful if you would give this matter your earliest attention.*
- *We look forward to hearing from you soon.*
- *We look forward to your confirmation at your earliest convenience.*
- *We await your good news.*

With the exception of sales letters, business letters are usually one page long, but sometimes it is impossible to write the entire letter on one sheet of paper. A second or continuation sheet must be used in this case. When using the second or continuation sheets, plain paper of the same quality, size and color as the first page must be used and typed with a second-page heading to show: the number of the sheet; the name of your correspondent; the date of the letter.

6. Complimentary Close and Signature

(1) Complimentary Close

The complimentary close is merely a polite way of ending a letter. It is placed two or four lines below the last line of the body of the letter. It should match the salutation. If you are writing a very formal letter which begin “Dear Sirs”, you should end it with “Yours faithfully”. “Yours sincerely” is now a generally accepted ending to any business letter. “Yours truly” is also widely used. “Cordially” may be used when it is desired to show personal or business friendship. You may also end with “Best regards” or “Best wishes” if you know the person very well. The most commonly used sets of salutation and complimentary close are:

Relationship	Salutation		Closing	Comment
	Male	Female		
Not known	Dear Sir(s), Gentlemen:	Madam, Dear Madam, Dear Mesdames,	Yours faithfully, Faithfully yours, Yours truly, Truly yours,	Formal—very commonly used in Britain, America & Canada
Known	Mr. Smith, Dear Mr. Smith,	Mrs. Smith, Dear Mrs. Smith,	Yours sincerely, Sincerely yours, Yours truly,	Informal—used between persons known to each other
Familiar	Dear John,	Dear Alice,	Yours ever, (With) Best, Wishes,	



(2) The Signature

All letters must be signed. Unsigned letters have no authority. The letter should be signed by the person who is sending it. A business letter is signed in different ways according to the degree of responsibility assumed by the one who signs it. If the letter is signed by one who can write on his own responsibility, only the personal name and title are required. If it is signed by one who has authority to sign for the organization or department, but does not have responsibility to act on his own, the name of the organization appears first, followed by the person's signature with or without the name of the department. A letter should be signed by hand, and in ink, and followed by the person's name typed so that the name is legible to the reader—sometimes people's handwritten signatures can be very difficult to read, then followed by his job title or position.

① An official signing for his company:

Yours faithfully,
THE OVERSEAS CO., LTD
(Signature)
W. Black
General Manager

② A partner signing for his firm:

Yours truly,
For THAMES BANK METAL CO.
(Signature)
Jackson Brown

③ An employee with special authority to sign:

Yours faithfully,
Per Pro HOPKINS, WRIGHT & CO.
(Signature)
J. Bell

④ An employee without special authority to sign:

Yours faithfully,
For Sales Manager
(Signature)
R. Hopkins

⑤ Individual signing on one's own behalf:

- *Sincerely yours,*
(Signature)
Harry Brown
- *Sincerely yours,*
(Signature)
(Miss) Mary Green
(or Mrs.) Mary Green



7. Special Notations

(1) Enclosure Notation

If any documents, catalogues, price lists, etc., are sent with a letter, it is necessary to add “Enclosure” or its abbreviation “Enc.”, at least two lines below the “Signature” at the left margin, or two lines below the reference initials to facilitate checking up on sealing and opening the envelope and for record purpose. The marking may be in any of the following ways:

- *Enclosures (3)*
- *Encl. 3 catalogues*
- *Enc. 1 invoice*
- *Encls: As stated*

(2) Carbon Copy

Carbon Copy is usually abbreviated to C.C or CC. Copies of letters are sometimes given to relevant people who you may have more than one person dealing with sales to a particular customer—in this case all the people dealing with sales to that customer should get a copy of any correspondence sent. Carbon Copy means the letters are sent to some other person, abbreviated as C.C., typed two line below the enclosure. If there is no enclosure, type it two lines below the signature.

Sometimes, people distribute “blind” copies within their company—which means that they give someone a copy of the letter, but do not indicate this fact on the letter itself or this fact is specified on the copy only by the abbreviation “bcc” and the recipient’s name.

(3) Postscript

Postscript is a common feature in personal letters, but tends not to be used so much in business letters. If you wish to either draw someone’s attention or clarify a point, use “NB”. This may either be used in the body of a letter immediately after the point has been made.

Please pay attention to the fact that do not use “NB” or “PS” just because you forget to include something in the body of the letter. When you realize you have forgotten to include something, the whole letter should be retyped.

In business letters a postscript is used only as a device to draw the reader’s attention to a point that the writer wants to emphasize, which is either deliberately left out from the body of the letter for presentation as a PS or repeated in it’s mentioned above. For example:

Yours faithfully,
The OVERSEAS CO., LTD
(Signature)

Jackson Brown

Sales Agent

Enc. as stated

c.c. Mr. Henry Brown-EIE Co. (Sales Manager)

P.S. I’m going to see you at the Chinese Export Corporation. J.B.



Section Four Addressing Envelopes

The address on the envelope must be correct, legible, and placed in the appropriate location. Very often the envelopes have the return address printed in the upper left corner. The address of the receiver on the envelope should be typed about half way down the envelope. And the address of the sender's should be placed at the left corner above the envelope. Remember to use the correspondent's full address, including the post town followed by the county name and postcode. Don't use "No. " before street numbers, but include it when using a post office Box Number, thus: "P.O. Box No.". Type words such as "Street", "Road", and "Avenue" in full. The postmark or stamps should be placed in the upper right-hand corner, while the bottom left-hand corner is for post notations such as "Confidential", "Street", "Printed Matter", etc.

1. Block style

<i>Overseas Trading Co. 24 Park Street London EC4, England</i>	<i>Stamp</i>
<i>Hunan Foreign Trading Corp. 32 Wuyi Road Changsha, Hunan, China</i>	
<i>By Air Mail</i>	

2. Indented style

<i>Hunan Foreign Trading Corp. 32 Wuyi Road Changsha, Hunan, China</i>	<i>Stamp</i>
<i>Overseas Trading Co. 24 Park Street London EC4, England</i>	
<i>Registered</i>	

You may sometimes have to write to someone who is only temporarily at a certain company and who will then return to his original address. While he is in his temporary position, you should write to him "care of" (c/o) the company he is staying with.

<i>Overseas Trading Co.</i> <i>24 Park Street</i> <i>London EC4, England</i> <i>Mr. John Smith</i> <i>c/o Hunan Foreign Trading Corp.</i> <i>Changsha, Hunan, China</i> <i>Urgent</i>	<i>Stamp</i>
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If a letter is to be taken from you by someone to the addressee, write his name below the addressee's name with the following words in front of it: Politeness of (or By Kindness of, Through the Courtesy of, Per Kindness of, Forwarded by, PER Favor of, By Favor of, With Favor of, Favored by).

<i>Overseas Trading Co.</i> <i>24 Park Street</i> <i>London EC4, England</i> <i>Mr. John Smith</i> <i>Kindness of Mr. Zhang Ming</i> <i>Private</i>	<i>Stamp</i>
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Generally speaking, the address of the envelope should agree with the inside name and address. It should be written in the following order:

Name

Title (position or department)

Company name

Street address

Town

County (or province)

Country

Post notations such as “Registered(挂 号)”, “Confidential(密 函)”, “Via Air Mail(航 空)”, “Sample of no value(样品)”, “Private(亲启)”, “Urgent(急件)”, etc. should be placed in the bottom left-hand corner. The following is a specimen of an envelope.

<i>B/D Corp.</i> <i>145 Fifth Avenue</i> <i>New York NY10023</i>	<i>Stamp</i>
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U.S.A.

*Mr. Green White
c/o China National Chartering Corp.
P.O. Box 592
Beijing
China*

Confidential

If you ask someone to take a letter to someone else for you, you should write as follows:

Mr. J. W. Smith

By kindness of Mr. (Mrs. or Miss or Ms)... or

Through the courtesy of Mr. (Mrs. or Miss or Ms)...

Section Five Good Writing Principles

In writing business letters, we should always bear in mind the essential qualities of them—the 7C's: completeness, concreteness, clearness, conciseness, courtesy, consideration and correctness.

1. Completeness

A business letter is successful and functions well only when it contains all the necessary information. When writing, we have to see to it that all the matters are discussed, and all the questions are answered. Incompleteness is not only impolite, but also leads to the recipient's unfavorable impression toward your firm. Very often he would not like to take the trouble inquiring once again.

Example(1)

A. (Poor) *The goods can be delivered.*

B. (Better) *The goods can be delivered by 14 June.*

Example(2)

A. (Poor) *We wish to inform that business has been done at \$10,000 per ton.*

B. (Better) *We wish to inform you that business has been done at \$10,000 per ton.*

2. Concreteness

Business letters should avoid being too general. In general letters everything seems to be mentioned but actually few are fully expounded upon. The recipient has a vague impression of what you try to achieve, so he is at a loss how to react upon reading your message. Especially for letters calling for specific reply, such as offer, inquiring about trade terms, etc., concreteness is always



stressed. The following guidelines can help us write concretely:

- (1) Use specific facts and figures;
- (2) Prefer active verbs to passive verbs or words in which action is hidden;
- (3) Choose vivid, image-building words;
- (4) Pay close attention to word orders, put modifiers in right place.

However, not on all occasions do the business letters try to be concrete and specific. Sometimes vagueness is preferred. Sometimes for “strategic” consideration, the writer avoids being too definite. For example, when we want to compare the qualities, prices, etc. of the products from different manufacturers, we may open tentative offers to several producers. The offers we deliver are without engagement, they should not be too concrete, but more flexible.

Example(1)

A. (Poor) *So that settlement can be made without delay, please finish the letters in advance of December 10.*

B. (Better) *Please finish your letters before December 10, so that settlement can be made without delay.*

Example(2)

A. (Poor) *We wish to confirm our fax dispatched yesterday.*

B. (Better) *We confirm our fax of January 6.*

3. Clearness

To make sure that your letter is so clear that it cannot be misunderstood. It is advisable to write on—not above or below—the level of the reader’s understanding. To do this, we should choose plain, simple, familiar, conversational, straight-forward words; aim at unity, coherence and emphasis in your expression.

Example(1)

A. (Poor) *We have your remittance of January 30 in the amount of \$300, and wish at this time to thank you for it.*

B. (Better) *Thank you for your remittance of January 30 for \$300.*

Example(2)

A. (Poor) *As to the steamers sailing from Hong Kong to San Francisco, we have twice a month direct services.*

B. (Better) *We have semimonthly direct sailing every month from Hong Kong to San Francisco.*

C. (Better) *We should have two direct sailings every month from Hong Kong to San Francisco.*

D. (Better) *We have direct sailing from Hong Kong to San Francisco every two months.*

Example(3)

A. (Poor) *They informed Messrs John & Sons that they would receive an answer in a few days.*

B. (Better) *They informed Messrs John & Sons that the latter would receive an answer in a few days.*



4. Conciseness

Conciseness is often considered to be the most important writing principle, it enables to save both the writer's and the recipient's time. Conciseness means to express in as few words as possible without sacrificing completeness, concreteness and courtesy. To do so, the following guidelines are to be observed:

- (1) Omit trite expressions;
- (2) Avoid unnecessary expressions;
- (3) Include only relevant facts with courtesy;
- (4) Organize effectively.

Compare the following two sentences. B is conciseness and more effective than sentence A:

Example(1)

A. (Poor) *The senator, who comes from New York, gave a speech that was long and tedious.*

B. (Better) *The senator from New York gave a long, tedious speech.*

Example(2)

A. (Poor) *We have received your letter of 4 June, we are giving you the information you want.*

B. (Better) *We are sending you the information you asked for in your letter of June 4.*

5. Courtesy

Courtesy plays a considerate rule in business letter writing, as in all business activities. It is a favorable introduction card, helping to strengthen your present business relations and to establish new ones. Beautiful and courteous words do not necessarily mean courteous attitude. It comes from your genuine sincerity and respect for others. To show courtesy, one should follow closely the suggestions given:

- (1) Be sincerely tactful, thoughtful and appreciative;
- (2) Take a personable, friendly and modest tone;
- (3) Omit expressions that irritate, hurt or belittle. It is always offensive to show any sign of arrogance or prejudice;
- (4) Be prompt in reply. If your answer is delayed, give strong and understandable reasons.

Compare the following two sentences. B is courtesy and more effective than sentence A:

Example(1)

A. (Poor) *Unfortunately we cannot fill your order because you failed to send your check.*

B. (Better) *We shall process your order promptly upon receiving your check.*

Example(2)

A. (Poor) *I demand that you send me a copy of agreement.*

B. (Better) *Please send us a copy of the agreement.*

6. Consideration

Consideration emphasizes “You—attitude” rather than “We—attitude”. When writing letters



we should keep the reader's request, needs, desires as well as his feelings in mind.

Compare the following two sentences. B is consideration and more effective than sentence A:

A. (Poor) *Apparently you misunderstood our order. Anyway you shipped the wrong thing.*

B. (Better) *Apparently our instructions are not clear, with the result that the wrong article was shipped.*

Please compare:

(1) We—attitude

- *We allow a 2% discount for cash payment.*
- *We won't be able to send you the latest catalogue before this weekend.*

(2) You—attitude

- *You can earn a 2% discount when you pay cash.*
- *We will send you the latest catalogue.*

7. Correctness

Business letters must be correct; otherwise they may be misunderstood and run the risk of reaching nowhere or going astray. Business letters often are basis for various commercial documents such as contracts, agreements, so they are concerned with the rights, obligations, etc., of the two sides of a trade, the fact of which calls special attention from writers.

Correctness refers much more than that of grammar, punctuation, and spelling of words, which are the basic elements. A letter may be perfect mechanically speaking, but still it at times does not achieve desired effect. To guarantee correctness of a business letter, one should always bear in mind the following:

(1) Choose only accurate facts, words and figures. Be clear about the meanings of all the trade terms and jargon you use.

(2) Be honest about the things you say. Don't over-say or under-say, be matter-of-fact in attitude.

(3) Use the correct level of language. Don't overestimate or underestimate your counter part in foreign trade activities.

(4) Observe all the writing mechanics, including the 7C's. Avoid silly spelling errors and grammatical blemishes.

Example(1)

A. (Poor) *We have obtained your name and address to Singapore Chamber of Commerce who has told us that you wish to import electric goods manufactured in China.*

B. (Better) *We have obtained your name and address from Singapore Chamber of Commerce who has told us that you wish to import electric goods manufactured in China.*

Example(2)

A. (Poor) *Once the import license is approved, we shall issue an L/C in your favor.*

B. (Better) *Once the import license is approved, we establish issue an L/C in your favor.*



Example(3)

A. (Poor) *Please amend the Letter of Credit No.222 allowing partial shipment and transshipment at Hong Kong.*

B. (Better) *Please amend the Letter of Credit No.222 to allow partial shipment and transshipment at Hong Kong.*

Section Six Some Rules of Good Writing

1. Study Your Reader's Interests

The letters you send out must create a good first impression. To achieve this, “put yourself in the reader’s position” and try to imagine how he will feel about what you write. Ask yourself constantly, “What are his needs, his wishes, his interests, his problems, and how can I meet them?” “What would be my own feelings, if I were to receive a letter of the kind I propose to write?” Try to imagine that you are receiving rather than sending the letter and emphasize the “You” attitude rather than me or us.

2. Adopt the Right Tone

If a letter is to achieve its purpose, its tone must be right. Before beginning to write think carefully about the way in which you want to influence your reader. Ask yourself, “What do I want this letter to do?” and then express yourself accordingly, being persuasive, apologetic, obliging, firm and so on, depending on the effect you want to produce.

3. Write Naturally and Sincerely

When you write or dictate a business letter, try to feel a genuine interest in person you are writing to and in his problems. Say what you have to say with sincerity and make sure that it sounds sincere. Express your thoughts in your own words and in your own way. Be yourself. Write so that what you say would sound natural if read over the telephone.

4. Avoid Wordiness

Make it a rule to use no more words than are needed to make your meaning clear. Business professionals today have many letters to read and welcome the art of letter writing that is direct and to the point.

5. Avoid Commercial Jargon

Avoid using stilted and roundabout phrases that add little or nothing to the sense of what you write. Such phrases were at one time common, but they have no place in modern business letter.



6. Write Effectively

In business letter writing we should use simple language, which calls for a plain style—a style that is simple, clear and easily understood. We have to remember that using simple language doesn't mean the content and expressions should be too simple to be meaningless. Simple language can also bear and express underlying thoughts. Smooth and graceful writing is what we want to obtain. Sometimes long and complicated words and expressions may cause understanding difficulties.

Be consistent in writing a business letter. Avoid repeating the same word in a sentence with a different meaning.

But in your efforts to avoid repetition don't make the opposite mistake of confusing your reader by using different words to express exactly the same thing. Don't say in the same letter that goods have been sent, forwarded, and dispatched, and if you are giving your letter to a firm, don't change it as you go along a "concern" or a "business", or an "organization". If you do, you will leave your reader wondering whether something different is intended. Avoid using vague expressions but concrete words.

7. Avoid Monotony

In a business letter the vivid words and loose sentences will make the message vivid, which will attract the reader's attention and interest and desire. Short sentences are preferable to long ones, because short sentences are easily understood. A succession of short sentences, however, has a disagreeable jerky effect and the best letters are those that can provide a mixture of sentences of different length. Sometimes you wish to emphasize some words, and then you may place them at the beginning of the sentence.

Emphasis can also be achieved through phrases like "It is...", "It was..." to introduce statements.

Example(1)

A. *I met your director yesterday.* (正常语序)

B. *It was yesterday that I met your director.* (强调时间)

Example(2)

A. *Unfortunately, the goods did not arrive in time.* (正常语序)

B. *It was unfortunate that the goods did not arrive in time.* (强调语序)

8. Plan Your Letter

Many business letters are short and routine and can be written or dictated without special preparation. Others must first be thought about and planned. First jot down all the points you wish to cover and then arrange them in logical order to provide the plan for a letter that will read naturally and fluently. If your letter is in reply to one received, underline those parts which seek information or on which comment is necessary. This will ensure that your reply is complete.

9. Pay Attention to First and Last Impressions

If your letter is one sent in reply to another, refer in the opening paragraph to the letter you



are answering, but avoid the sort of old-fashioned phrases, such as “We are in receipt of your letter...”. Although they are grammatically correct, they tend to be dull and monotonous, worn threadbare from over-use.

If you want to have a letter well-planned and followed by a logical sequence, both the first and the last impression are very important. Avoid the kind of ending introduced by a participle. “Thanking you in anticipation” and similar endings are no longer used in modern letter writing. They mean nothing and serve no useful purpose.

10. Check Your Letters

Be careful to create a good first impression with each of your letters. Before signing, check it for the accuracy of contents and test its general suitability against such questions as these.

- (1) Is its appearance attractive; is it well laid out?
- (2) Is it correctly spelt and properly punctuated?
- (3) Does it cover all essential points and is the information given correct?
- (4) Is what I have said clear, concise and courteous?
- (5) Does it sound natural and sincere?
- (6) Does it adopt the reader's point of view and will it be readily understood?
- (7) Is its general tone right and is it likely to create the impression intended?
- (8) Is it the kind of letter I should like to receive if I were in the reader's place?

If the answer to all questions is “yes”, then the letter will take the first step in creating good will and you may safely sign and send it.

Section Seven Useful Words & Expressions

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. appreciate 感谢 | 10. state enterprise 国有企业 |
| 2. ship 装运 | 11. business contacts 业务联系人 |
| 3. 2% discount 2%的折扣 | 12. take the liberty of 冒昧地 |
| 4. latest catalogue 最新目录 | 13. wish to inform you that... 谨此告知…… |
| 5. cash payment 现金支付 | 14. in compliance with /As (you) requested 按照
(你)方要求 |
| 6. fill one's order 执行订单, 完成订单 | 15. to be transferred to ... for attention 转交……处理 |
| 7. remittance 汇付 | 16. be given to understand that ... 据了解…… |
| 8. to hear from you 期待对方回复 | 17. fall within the scope of ... 属于……业务范围 |
| 9. have obtained your name and address from... 从……处获悉贵公司名址; 承蒙……的介绍获悉贵公司名址 | 18. take this opportunity to do sth. 借此机会做某事 |
| | 19. approach somebody for sth. 联系某人洽谈某事 |

Section Eight Useful Sentences

1. 起始用语

(1) 初次写信给对方

① 盼望与您建立商务关系。

We are writing to you with a desire to open an account with you.

② 请容我们自我介绍, 我们是广州首屈一指的贸易公司。

Let us introduce ourselves as a leading trading firm in Canton.

③ 我们希望与您建立商务关系。

Please allow us to express our hope of opening an account with you.

④ 我们的主供应商曾向我公司提及过贵公司, 认为你们是最可信赖的。

Your name has been mentioned by our chief supplier as the most reliable firm.

⑤ 我们深盼与英国公司接洽, 希望成为其销售代理商之一。

We are eager to establish contact with British companies with a view to acting as their selling agents.

⑥ 我们对您的新产品电译机甚感兴趣, 希望能寄来贵公司的产品目录及价格表。

We are interested in your new product electronic translator and shall be pleased to have a catalogue and price list.

⑦ 我们是此城市最主要的服装经销商之一, 并且在八个邻近市镇有分支机构。

We are one of the leading garment dealers in this city and have branches in eight neighboring towns.

(2) 与对方有过交易记录

① 我们的新产品已经上市, 特此奉告。

We are pleased to inform you that we have just marketed our new product.

② 贵公司是否愿将下列货品(价目)赐知?

Will you please quote the following items?

③ 我们应认识到不让顾客失望是非常重要的。

We should appreciate that it is of utmost importance that we are not to let down our customers.

(3) 回复对方来函

① 感谢您 5 月 25 日的来信。

Thank you for your letter dated May 25.

② 本公司的产品目录已于今天寄出, 特此通知。

We are glad/pleased to inform you that we have sent our catalogue today.

③ 很高兴通知您本公司的新产品已经上市。

We are happy to advise you that we have marketed the new product.

- ④ 承蒙贵公司 6 月 25 日来函询问, 甚表感激。

We are obliged to you for your inquiry of June 25.

- ⑤ 因此, 如果贵方服装质量令人满意, 价格合理, 我们将大量地进行常规订购。

If therefore the quality of your garments is satisfactory and the prices are right, we expect to place regular orders for fairly large quantities.

2. 结尾用语

- (1) 急切等候您的回音。

Your prompt reply is eagerly awaited.

- (2) 期盼很快能得到您的回音。

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

- (3) 是否能很快收到您的回信?

May we expect your prompt response?

- (4) 我们希望能有为您展示我们的服务效率的机会。

We should appreciate the opportunity of showing you how efficiently we can serve you.

- (5) 如果您能立即处理这件事, 我们将甚为感激。

Your prompt attention to this matter would be highly appreciated.

- (6) 我们希望这将引起贵公司的注意。

We hope that this will meet your immediate attention.

3. 实用表达法

(1) How to owe/have one's name and address to/from ... (关于寄信人获得收信人信息的渠道的表达方式)

- ① We have obtained your name and address from ...

- ② Your firm has been recommended to us by ...

- ③ Through the courtesy of ..., we come to know your name and address.

- ④ We owe/have your name and address to ...

- ⑤ We are indebted to ... for your name and address.

- ⑥ Your name and address has been given to us by ...

- ⑦ We are given to understand that ...

⑧ On the recommendation of ..., we have learned with pleasure the name address of your firm.

- ⑨ We come to know the name and address of your firm through ...

- ⑩ Through the courtesy of ... we got your name ...

... has been kindly recommended/given/introduced to us ... by ... as/that ...

(2) How to introduce business ranges (关于介绍寄信人公司业务范围的表达方式)

① Our company deals with (handles, deals in, trades in, is in the line of) the import and export of ...

- ② We specialize in (are engaged in, are specialized in) the exportation of ...
- ③ We are one of the largest ... importers in our country and have handled with various kinds of the products for about ... years.
- ④ We write to introduce ourselves as ...
- ⑤ We take the liberty of doing sth./to do sth. ...
- ⑥ We wish to inform you that ...
- ⑦ To fall within the scope of ...

e.g. As the lines (items) fall within the scope of our business, we should like to establish direct relations with you. (由于此货物属我们的经营范围, 我们很愿意与贵方建立直接贸易关系。)

(3) How to express your intentions (关于目的)

- ① We approach you in the hope of/expect/with a view to doing sth./of doing sth.
- ② We avail ourselves of this opportunity to do sth.(write to you) and see if we can ...
- ③ We approach you for sth.

(4) How to express credit standing for letter sender (关于寄信人资信情况的表达方式)

① Our bank references include the Bank of They can provide you information about our business and finances.

- ② For our credit standing, please refer to the following bank ...
- ③ As to our standing, we are permitted to mention the Bank of ..., as a reference.

(5) To establish/enter into business relations with ... (关于与某人建立业务关系的表达方式)

We are desirous of entering into business relations with you.

(6) How to express your requirements (关于要求的表达方式)

- ① Will you please submit/provide/furnish us with ...
- ② We would be grateful if you could ...
- ③ We would be very pleased (grateful) if ...

(7) Reply (回复)

- ① ...in compliance with your request /as (you) requested
- ② To be transferred to...for attention

e.g. Your letter of May 1 has been transferred to our agent for immediate attention. (贵方 5 月 1 日的来信已转交我方代理及时处理)

- ③ We are given to understand that ...

Section Nine Exercises

I. Translate the following expressions into English.

- | | |
|---------|-------|
| 1. 商务参赞 | 3. 清单 |
| 2. 进出口 | 4. 询价 |



- | | |
|-----------|-------------|
| 5. 样品 | 13. 有竞争性的价格 |
| 6. 价目表 | 14. 欧洲主要市场 |
| 7. 商品目录 | 15. 独家经营 |
| 8. 商会 | 16. 厂家 |
| 9. 市价 | 17. 货号 |
| 10. 协议 | 18. 交货 |
| 11. 客户 | 19. 规格 |
| 12. 商品交易会 | 20. 试购订单 |

II. Please improve the following sentences to make them more idiomatic.

1. We have received your letter of June 4, we are giving you the information you want.
现寄给你方在 6 月 4 日来函中所要求的资料。
2. We are in receipt of your favor of the letter of May 10.
贵方 5 月 10 日来函收悉。
3. This is to tell you about our shipment problems.
请悉知我方装运问题。
4. We beg to state that your letter of May 5 has been given careful consideration.
对贵方 5 月 5 日来信我方将仔细考虑。
5. Allow us to state is closing that we sincerely hope you will give your careful consideration to our proposals.
我们希望你能考虑我方建议。
6. Hoping to hear from you soon, we remain.
期盼回音。
7. You informed us in your letter that it was not possible to offer us Gallnuts as you had no stocks available.
你方来信告知，由于没有存货，不能发盘五倍子。
8. With reference to your letter of 23rd ult, we have pleasure in confirming the following order.
兹回复你方上月 23 日来函，我方乐意确认以下订货。
9. Please take note of the Lot Number of bales lest the parcel should be mixed up on landing.
请注意货件的批号，以免货物卸岸时混淆不清。
10. Samples will be sent and offers will be made upon receipt of your specific enquiries.
一收到你方的具体询盘，我们就发盘并寄送样品。
11. In reply, we regret to inform you that we are now not in a position to offer you the quantity as required.
兹复你方来函，很遗憾我们不能提供你方所需数量。
12. Thank you for your quotation dated September 5, 2019. We intend to place a trial order with you.
你方 2019 年 9 月 5 日来的报价收悉，我们打算向你试订购。



13. We want you to open the relevant L/C at the end of May.
我们希望你在 5 月底开立有关信用证。
14. We do not believe you will have cause for dissatisfaction.
我们相信你们会感到很满意。
15. Send your latest catalogue and price list to us.
请寄送你们的最新商品目录和价格表。
16. You ought to effect insurance on the goods with PICC.
希望贵公司能向中国人民保险公司投保该货物。
17. I demand that you send me a copy of the agreement.
请寄送一份协议书。
18. Your products are not up to our standard.
你方的产品质量达不到我们的标准。
19. How I wish I could agree to your suggestions.
很遗憾，我不能同意你的建议。
20. As to the steamers sailing from Hong Kong to San Francisco, we have bimonthly direct services.
我们有从香港到旧金山的直达船，每半月一次。

III. Arrange the following in proper form as they should be set out in a letter.

1. Sender's name: Guangdong International Trading Corp.
2. Sender's address: 48 Zhongshan Road, Guangzhou, Guangdong, China
3. Sender's Telephone: 85443298
4. Sender's cable address: 5527 CS
5. Sender's telex address: 3328 CS CN
6. Date: September 15, 2019
7. Receiver's name: Standard Oil Company
8. Receiver's address: 38 Fifth Avenue, London, U.K.
9. Subject: Refrigerators
10. The message:

We thank you for your letter of September 3 enquiring for the captioned goods.

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

We look forward to receiving your specific inquiry with keen interest.

IV. Address an envelope for the above letter.

V. Point out the mistakes in the following addresses and rewrite them.

A.

England,London,E.C.3

B.

No.12, Queen Street

C.

Mr. John

Bench Street 150
Mr. Henry Taylor
England

London City Bank
London, E.C.5

16 Front Street
Liverpool L6 3FY

VI. Please write a letter according to the following particulars.

你是上海轻工产品 (light industry products) 公司的经理王湘。你的厂址是上海市解放路 11 号, 电话号码为 43715589。你收到太平洋贸易公司 (Pacific Trading Inc.) 的询函, 其地址是美国纽约百老汇街 87 号, 邮编: 10408。

你的任务: (1) 设计你公司的信头。(2) 按正式格式写出对方地址。(3) 将下列信文用英语写入: 感谢贵方对我公司纺织品的兴趣。按照您的要求, 我们寄出有插图说明的目录 (illustrated catalogue) 和价格表各一份。期待早日收到您的回音。(4) 为此信加上日期 (2019 年 10 月 28 日) 和签名。(5) 说明有附件。(6) 格式用全平头式。

VII. Choose the best answer to complete the following statements.

- A letterhead includes _____.
A. name of the company
B. the E-mail address
C. address of the company
D. all of above
- The inside address contains all of the following information, except _____.
A. company name
B. the date of typing of the message
C. the name of the city and the country
D. the name of the state
- For a multiple-page letter, _____ should only be used on the first page.
A. letterhead
B. paper of the same quantity
C. paper of the same size
D. paper of the same quality
- A mail notation should be included in which of the following cases: _____.
A. the exact address is unknown
B. the sender has something exciting mentioned in the letter
C. the letter is confidential and only readable to someone intended
D. none of the above
- What does the subject line tell the recipients? _____.
A. What the letter is about.
B. When the letter has been sent.
C. Who wrote the letter.
D. Who typed the letter.

VIII. Arrange the following in the proper form as they should be set out in a letter.

- Sender's name: China National Light Industrial Products Import & Export Corporation, Shanghai Branch
- Sender's address: 123 Jiefang Road, Shanghai, China
- Sender's Fax Number: 86-22-67891236
- Sender's e-mail address: linda@mail. zlnet. com. cn



5. Date: March 18, 2019
6. Receiver's name: H. G. Wilkinson Company, Limited
7. Receiver's address: 456 Lombart Street, Lagos Nigeria
8. Salutation used: Dear Sirs
9. Subject Line: Sewing Machines
10. The message:
 - (1) We thank you for your letter of March 6 enquiring for the captioned goods.
 - (2) The enclosed booklet contains details of all our Sewing Machines and will enable you to make a suitable selection.
 - (3) We look forward to receiving your specific enquiry with keen interest.
11. Complimentary close used: Yours faithfully