



# **Writing a Business Letter**

***Contemporary Advanced English Writing***

# Contents

- In this part, you will learn:
  - 1. how to write a business letter
  - 2. how to write a notice
  - 3. how to write a memo
  - 4. how to write an agenda
  - 5. how to write minutes of a meeting
  - 6. how to Write a Résumé

# Writing a Business Letter

- Supposing you have bought a defective laptop from a foreign company, what are you going to do then?
- Most probably you'll decide to write to the company about your problems. In this case, you are supposed to write a formal business letter to state your case.

# Writing a Business Letter

- In real life there are various occasions on which we *communicate* with other social institutions, such as a company, school, or government agency. Such communication usually involves business letters. This chapter will teach you how to write an effective business letter so that you'll be able to communicate with other social institutions in a most appropriate way.

# Writing a Business Letter

- **A. Understanding a Business Letter**
- A business letter is a letter often used to communicate with other social institutions, such as a school, hospital, department store, company, or government agency. It is widely used when we handle business matters with other people or organizations. Writing an effective business letter requires that you acquire good language skills and fully understand the style and format of business letters.

# Writing a Business Letter

- A formal business letter usually consists of six parts: heading, inside address, salutation, body, close, and signature. Sometimes, notations are included, but they are optional.
- **1. Heading**
- It gives your detailed address and the date on which the letter is written. You should write your address in English as follows:

# Writing a Business Letter

- Line 1: The doorplate number and the name of the road (or P .O. box )
- Line 2: The name of the city or county
- Line 3: The name of the province or state and the postal code
- Line 4: The name of the country
- Line 5: The date
- Now read the following four samples and figure out how an address should be written in English.

# Writing a Business Letter

- **Sample 1**

17 Trumpington Street  
Cambridge, CB2 1QA  
U.K.

29 May, 2002



# Writing a Business Letter

- **Sample 2**

109 Madison Avenue

New York, NY 10022

U.S.A.

September 15, 1999

# Writing a Business Letter

- **Sample 3**

The Dept. of English  
Shanghai University  
99 Shangda Road  
Shanghai, 200436  
China  
January 2, 2004

# Writing a Business Letter

- **Sample 4**

Spring International Travel Service (U. K.)  
Ltd.

68 Kenway Road  
London, SW5 0RD  
U.K.

26 December, 1998

# Writing a Business Letter

- **Note:** Special care should be taken when you write the date. All-figure dating, such as 04/03/03, is usually avoided in formal writing. For some readers, such dates are ambiguous. In Britain, it refers to the fourth of March, 2003, and is written as 4 March, 2003 or 4th March, 2003; in America, 04/03/03 means the third of April, 2003, and is written as April 3, 2003 or April 3rd, 2003.

# Writing a Business Letter

- **2. Inside Name and Address**
- It refers to the addressee's name and address, including his or her full name, title, and address. This part can be dropped from private letters.
- There can be various types of honorific titles, such as Mr. , Miss, Mrs., Ms., Dr. , Prof. , and Pres. (President).
- If you are not sure about a person's specific name, you can use such a title as "The Sales Manager".

# Writing a Business Letter

- **3. Salutation**
- The most typical form of salutation is: Dear + title + name. For example, you can write "Dear Prof. Smith" or "Dear Miss Chen". It is usually followed by a comma (in British English) or a colon (in American English)

# Writing a Business Letter

- If you are not sure about the specific name of the addressee, you can use such forms as:
  - (a) "Dear Sir" or "Dear Madam" when the sex of the person is known;
  - (b) "Dear Sir or Madam" when the sex of the person is unknown;
  - (c) "Dear Sirs" when it is a collective body;
  - (d) "To whom it may concern" when it is a letter of certification, recommendation, etc.

# Writing a Business Letter

- **4. Body**
- It usually includes three components:
  - (1) the purpose of writing the business letter;
  - (2) the detailed message of the business letter; and
  - (3) the conclusion of the business letter.



# Writing a Business Letter

- **5. Complementary Close**
  - It usually takes the form of "Yours sincerely" or "Sincerely yours" followed by a comma.
  - It can also be "Yours faithfully" (in British English) or "Yours truly" (in American English)

# Writing a Business Letter

- **6. Signature**
- It should be placed between the complimentary close and your printed name. If you want to indicate your title or position, put it below your printed name.

# Writing a Business Letter

- **7. Notations**

- Notations are optional. There are usually three kinds of notations:
  - (a) P. S. (= postscript): An addition to the letter, below the place where you have signed your name. It is suggestive of some omissions that have been incurred when you wrote your letter.
  - (b) Encl. ( = Enclosure (s) ): Other files you want to attach to the letter, such as a résumé, a receipt, or a letter of certification.
  - (c) cc ( = carbon copy/copies ): Copies of this letter have been made for other departments or units.

# Writing a Business Letter

- **8. Format of Business Letters**
- Usually, there are two formats of English business letters: the semi-indented style (混合式) and the blocked style (并列式).
- According to the semi-indented style, the heading, inside name and address, salutation, complementary close, and signature are flush with the left margin. The body is also flush with the left margin, but the paragraphs in it are indented five spaces. Look at the following sketch: [A](#)

# Writing a Business Letter

- According to the blocked style, the heading, complementary close, and signature are flush with the right margin, whereas the rest components of the letter are flush with the left margin, including every paragraph of the body. Look at the following sketch: B

# Writing a Business Letter

- **9. Envelope**
- It must be noted that an English envelope is addressed differently from a Chinese one. On an English envelope, the sender's address is placed at the top left corner, and the receiver's address lies right in the center.

# Writing a Business Letter

- An English envelope usually contains the following elements:
  - (a) Information about the receiver, such as his or her title, name, and address. It is placed near the center of the envelope.
  - (b) Information about the sender, such as his or her name and detailed address. It is placed at the top left corner of the envelope.

# Writing a Business Letter

- (c) Stamp: It is stuck to the top right corner of the envelope.
- (d) Other information: It is placed at the bottom left corner of the envelope. There are three types of such information:



# Writing a Business Letter

- The nature of the mail, such as "Confidential", "Secret", "Urgent", and "Immediate", etc.
- The content of the mail, such as "Printed Matter", "Photos Enclosed", and "Sample"

# Writing a Business Letter

- Please read the following sample in order to get a better idea of what an English envelope is like :
- To conclude, writing an effective business letter involves a good understanding of its six components, its format, and the way an English envelope is addressed. More importantly, the language you use in the body of the business letter should be correct, clear, concise, and courteous.

# Writing an application Letter

- Read the sample application letters to learn what an effective application letter is like.

# Writing a Résumé

- Supposing you want to find a part-time job and the boss wants you to produce a summary of your own life, what are you going to do then? Most probably you'll write a résumé. In fact, writing a good resume has become an important part of the job-hunting process. This chapter will teach you how to write an effective résumé so that you'll have a better chance of landing an ideal job.
  - land a job: succeed in obtaining a job, especially against strong competition (informal)

# Writing a Résumé

- **A. Understanding a Resume**
- A résumé is a short written account of your education and past experiences. It is the mirror of your life and is often needed when you are looking for a new job.
- A résumé is usually made up of four basic and indispensable components:
  - Indispensable: absolutely essential

# Writing a Résumé

- Name, Address, and Telephone
- Experience
- Education
- Personal Data
- Other optional components include Job Objectives, Foreign Languages Skills, Publications, Hobbies, References, etc.

# Writing a Résumé

- 1. Name, Address, and Telephone
  - This is an important component of a résumé. Despite its simple content, it has a fairly rigid format. There are usually three types as follows:

# Writing a Résumé

- **Type 1**

Wang Daming

123 Beijing Rd, Apt. 505

Jing'an District, Shanghai 200040

The People's Republic of China

Telephone: 86-21-65506332



# Writing a Résumé

## Type 2

| Current Address           | Permanent Address           |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Shanghai University       | 123 Beijing Rd, Apt.<br>505 |
| 99 Shangda Rd, Box<br>307 | Jing'an District,           |
| Shanghai 200436           | Shanghai 200040             |
| P.R.C                     | P.R.C                       |
| Tel: 86 - 21 - 66133302   | Tel: 86 - 21 - 65506332     |
|                           |                             |

# Writing a Résumé

- Type 3

Wang Daming

123 Beijing Rd, Apt. 505

Jing'an District, Shanghai 200040

P.R.C

Telephone: 86 - 21 - 65506332

# Writing a Résumé

- An English address is usually written on three separate lines. The first line is the doorplate number and the street; the second line is the city, county, or province, together with the postal code; and the third line is the name of the country.

# Writing a Résumé

- **2. Experience**
- Your experience is an important part of your résumé. It tells people how long you've been working, where you have worked, and what position you have held. You can also indicate the character of your previous work, your experience, abilities, expertise, etc. List your experiences in chronological order and begin them with the most recent. For example:

# Writing a Résumé

- 2000-2004 M.A. in English and American Literature, Shanghai University
- 1995-2000 Teacher of English as a Foreign Language, Shanghai High School
- 1991-1995 B.A. in English, Shanghai International Studies University

# Writing a Résumé

- **3. Education**
- This refers to your high school education and above. The items to be included are the name of the school, the duration, the major, and the degree obtained. Start your list with the most recent and with the highest degree.

# Writing a Résumé

- If you have attended some training courses, you may as well specify their nature and the hours spent. For example,
  - 2001-2002    Shanghai University,  
Shanghai, China
  - Two semesters of graduate-level study  
in English & American Literature
  - Eight hours per week (evenings and  
weekends)

# Writing a Résumé

- **4. Personal Data**

- This includes your sex, date of birth, place of birth, nationality, marital status, and health conditions. You may also specify your height, weight, and personal hobbies. Personal Data can be placed at the end of your resume or at the right top corner of the first page of your resume. For example,



# Writing a Résumé

- Wang Dawei
- 123 Beijing Rd #505
- Jing'an District, Shanghai 200040
- P.R.C
- Tel-86-21-6613332
- Date of Birth: May 23, 1969
- Place of Birth: Shanghai
- Sex: Male
- Nationality: Chinese

# Writing a Résumé

- Please bear the following principles in mind when you write a résumé:
  - List your data reasonably
  - Use precise wording
  - Make careful revisions

# Writing a Résumé

- A résumé or C.V. (Curriculum Vitae). is a brief introduction of oneself with a list of one's qualifications, written in a special format. Normally, a résumé includes: (1) *personal information* such as name, sex, age, mailing address, E-mail address, phone number, and so on (2) *educational background*; (3) *work experience and referees*; and (4) *skills summary*.

**Challenge Yourself**

# Challenge Yourself

- There is a story presented a universally acknowledged professor in the field of negotiation.
- Fill in the blanks with proper words to complete the story.

# Squabbling

- **Squabbling:** to engage in a disagreeable argument, usually over trivial matter.

# The Original Story

- “Recently two of my **sons** were squabbling over some apple pie, each ***insisting*** that he should have the ***larger*** slice. ***Neither*** would agree to an even split. **So** I suggested that one boy cut the pie ***any*** way he liked, and ***the other*** boy could choose the piece he ***wanted***. This ***sounded*** fair to both of them, and they accepted . Each felt that he had gotten the square ***deal***.”

# A Notice

## Car Mileage

All car mileage claims for November should be completed and sent to Betty Lee by December 4th.

Claims received after this date cannot be included in employees' December pay checks.

Peter Burton  
Service Manager  
November 23rd



# A Notice

## **Component of a notice:**

1. Notice (optional)
2. The subject
3. Body
4. Name of the person who writes the notice (optional)
5. Job title of the person who writes the notice (optional)
6. Date

# Formal Invitations

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary  
of the founding of Mianyang Teachers' College  
The President, Mr. Yuan Sijia,  
Would like to invite *Prof. and Mrs. Allan Moss*  
to a Reception on Monday, September 5, 2005  
from 11:30 to 13:30 at the Guest House

R.S.V.P.

Tel.2273839

(regrets only)

Mr. and Mrs. Wang Shuocheng  
request the pleasure of your company  
to say farewell to Mr. Frank Johnson  
at a diner at Purple Garden  
on Thursday, 2nd May, 2001 at 6 p.m.

Mr. and Mrs. @@@

Will regret saying that a prior  
engagement prevented them  
attending

So thank Mr. @@'s kind invitation for  
the@@

# An exercise

- **Words and Expressions:**
- **ceremony cordially Fair fax  
floor forward promotion  
R.S.V.P. note Venue**

# An exercise

## Carrefour Nanfang Store

1 invites

Mr. Victor Huges to

the Nanfang Wine 2

Opening 3 with Tasting and 4 Sales

5: Food Junction

Third 6 of Carrefour Nanfang

# An exercise

1666 Humin Road

Date: Monday, April 20th

Time: 8 p. m. — 9 p. m.

Please 7: All guests will be able to buy  
nearly 20 8 wines at special prices.

We are looking 9 to welcoming you.  
10 before April 18th

By 11 : 64510654 or Tel: 64519044

# **Memo (Memorandum)**

## **Elements of a memo**

To:

From:

Date:

Subject:

Message:



# Agenda

- An agenda is a list of the items to be discussed at a meeting.
- A meeting without an agenda is like a ship without a captain; you have nothing to guide you and you have no excuse to get back on track if "Loud Howard" decides to hijack it to tell you about his bunions.
  - Bunions: painful swelling 炎肿

# Agenda

- A good meeting agenda will also serve as a guide to participants, making the meeting more efficient and productive. And a good meeting agenda is short and simple.
- An effective meeting agenda, which states what activities will take place during the meeting, serves various important functions:

# Agenda

- It forces the meeting leader or group to think out what needs to be accomplished
- Provided ahead of time (as it should be), the agenda lets people know what to expect and allows them to prepare as necessary
- It provides a blueprint or path for the meeting to follow
- It reminds people of what there is left to cover if time gets to be an issue

# Agenda

- Here is a meeting agenda template with explanations regarding key sections:
- The ***header*** is particularly useful if participants belong to various groups /organizations, or if the agenda will be made public record:

# Agenda

- Organization Name
- Group Meeting Agenda
- Location
- Date
- Starting and Ending Time

# Agenda

- The **body** of the agenda lists the actual items to be covered during the meeting. When possible, use actionable words such as *approve*, *discuss*, *adopt*, *announce* to let participants know what is expected of them. At the end of each item is a suggested time allotted (adding up to an hour and a half long meeting), but in reality time allotted will depend on your group's particular circumstances.

# Agenda

- *Welcome/Introductions/Warm-Up Activity*
  - Doing one of these is particularly helpful for groups that don't get together often. It is also a good way of getting the meeting started while not making late-comers miss anything substantive. (10 min)
- *Approve/adopt previous meeting minutes*
  - Obviously, only necessary if minutes are kept. (5 min)

# Agenda

- *Discuss the topics at hand.*
  - This will usually be broken up into several parts, and will take up the bulk of the meeting. This is where you would include items like “Review annual budget” or “Brainstorm fundraising ideas” or “Hear report from Finance Committee”. (60 min total)
    - the bulk of: the main part of



# Agenda

- *Announcements*
  - This is often kept to the end of the meeting, but because new information can sometimes change the focus of a meeting, it may be useful to have announcements early on. (10 min)
- *Decide on time and agenda for next meeting. (5 min).*

# Agenda

- Sample agenda and Minutes of Meeting

# How to Write Meeting Minutes

- **What is the purpose of minutes?**
- Minutes are written as an accurate record of a group's meetings, and a record decisions taken. They are useful because people can forget what was decided at a meeting if there is no written record of the proceedings. Minutes can also inform people who were not at the meeting about what took place.

# How to Write Meeting Minutes

- **Who writes the minutes?**
- It is normal practice for one person at each meeting to be given the task of writing the minutes. It may be the same person each meeting, or the task may be rotated.

# How to Write Meeting Minutes

- **What do the minutes contain?**
- Before each meeting an agenda should be drawn up, detailing the matters to be discussed at the meeting. A set of minutes should normally include the following information:

# How to Write Meeting Minutes

- time, date and place of meeting;
- list of people attending;
- list of absent members of the group;
- approval of the previous meeting's minutes, and any matters arising from those minutes;
- for each item in the agenda, a record of the principal points discussed and decisions taken;
- time, date and place of next meeting;
- name of person taking the minutes.

# How to Write Meeting Minutes

- **Tips for Writing Minutes of Meetings**
  - **Identify what the meeting is about.**

Review the agenda including the names of attending participants in order to become familiar with the context of the meeting. The more you know about the upcoming discussions and participants, the more effective your notes will be.

# How to Write Meeting Minutes

- **Use the agenda to format the minutes.**
  - Before the meeting begins, prepare a template with the agenda and leave plenty of space for notes. Remember to include all relevant information, the date and time, agenda, participants, time adjourned, next meeting date, etc. Prepare an attendance checklist especially if you are not familiar with the group or committee.



# How to Write Meeting Minutes

- **Where possible, the notetaker should not be a participant.**
  - Be impartial and objective. It is very difficult to take minutes of a meeting that you are expected to participate in. As notetaker you are not in charge of the meeting, the chairperson is. Your focus must be on capturing the discussion of the meeting, not on leading the discussion.

# How to Write Meeting Minutes

- **Writing minutes is not the same as transcribing.**
  - Keep your minutes brief and to the point. The minutes of a meeting should be a snapshot of discussions and decisions. Effective minute taking does not mean you are recording every word that was said, this could lead to missing important points.

# How to Write Meeting Minutes

- **Attach any documentation given out at the meeting.**
  - If any materials or brochures were distributed at the meeting, include copies with the meeting notes.

# How to Write Meeting Minutes

- **Type up minutes as soon as possible.**
  - It is good practice to put together a draft of the minutes as soon as possible, while it is still fresh in your mind. The longer you put this first draft off, the greater the probability of forgetting something crucial.

# How to Write Meeting Minutes

- **Proofing**
  - Be sure to check and double-check your draft before sending to the participants. Keep all rough notes until the minutes have been approved.
- **Record meetings if possible.**
  - If possible, use a tape recorder to record the meeting and then prepare your notes from the recording.

# How to Write Meeting Minutes

- **Step-by step approach to writing meeting minutes**
- Keeping track of **minutes** when attending a meeting is important. The minutes recorded can let one know what took place during the meeting. Think about it, if there were no minutes recorded then how will one be able to keep abreast of the topics discussed in regular or client meetings.
- **First things first**
- First, remember to bring a pen and notebook to the meeting.
- second, writes down who is attending the meeting
- Third, the meeting must have some kind of purpose, choose one. For example, this meeting deals with *How to generate more clients*.

# How to Write Meeting Minutes

- Fourth, don't try to write down everything that is said, focus on only the important (key) points in the meeting.
- Fifth, note agreements and any special planning that is taking place. Basically, write down who is talking, what they are talking about, and when they said they were going to do something.
- Sixth, if you miss or get confuse about anything simply ask. Ask to have your draft read back to you or for some type of contact information.
- Seven, again, if you are confused by anything, ask someone right away even before the meeting is over.

# How to Write Meeting Minutes

- Eight, once the meeting is done, start working on a draft because you don't want to have forgotten anything as we tend to do as time passes.
- Ten, always put the purpose of the meeting, date, the time it took place, where it took place and the name of everyone that attended.
- Eleven, divide your draft so that you are numbering and listing important points that were discussed and the way it was to be handled. All topics that are alike, group together and put under one heading (all points dealing with “Company Insurance”) all go under that section.)
- Twelve, make sure you proofread your rough copy, afterwards mail it to the people who attended the meeting.