

**A Handbook of Business Correspondence**

**Príručka obchodnej korešpondencie v anglickom jazyku**

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# 1 BUSINESS LETTERS IN ENGLISH

Business letters are formal paper communications between, to or from businesses and usually sent through the Post Office or sometimes by courier. Business letters are sometimes called "snail-mail" (in contrast to email which is faster). This lesson concentrates on business letters but also looks at other business correspondence. It includes:

- letter
- memo
- fax
- email

## Who writes Business Letters?

Most people who have an occupation have to write business letters. Some write many letters each day and others only write a few letters over the course of a career. Business people also read letters on a daily basis. Letters are written *from* a person/group, known as the **sender** *to* a person/group, known in business as the **recipient**. Here are some examples of senders and recipients:

- business «» business
- business «» consumer
- job applicant «» company
- citizen «» government official
- employer «» employee
- staff member «» staff member

## Why write Business Letters?

There are many reasons why you may need to write business letters or other correspondence:

- to persuade
- to inform
- to request
- to express thanks
- to remind
- to recommend
- to apologize
- to congratulate
- to reject a proposal or offer
- to introduce a person or policy
- to invite or welcome
- to follow up
- to formalize decisions

You should learn more about the different types of business letters, and how to write them. You will learn about formatting, planning, and writing letters, as well as how to

spot your own errors. These instructions are designed to help you write business letters and correspondence, but they will also help you learn to read, and therefore respond to, the letters you receive. You will also find samples that you can use and alter for your own needs

### Formatting Business Letters

Block format is the most common format used in business today. With this format, nothing is centred. The sender's address, the recipient's address, the date and all new paragraphs begin at the left margin, like this:

Wicked Wax Co. Ltd 22 Charlton Way London, SE10 8QY	SENDER'S ADDRESS may be printed company logo and address
5th December, 2006	DATE
Ms. Maggie Jones Angel Cosmetics Inc. 110 East 25th Street New York, NY, 10021 USA	RECIPIENT'S ADDRESS
Your ref: 123 Our ref: abc	RECIPIENT'S REFERENCE (IF ANY) SENDER'S REFERENCE (IF ANY)
Dear Ms. Jones,	SALUTATION
<u>Forthcoming Exhibition</u>	SUBJECT
First paragraph...	BODY OF LETTER
Second paragraph...	
Third paragraph...	
Sincerely,	CLOSING
<b><i>Morris Howard</i></b>	SIGNATURE (HAND-WRITTEN)
Morris Howard, President	NAME, TITLE (TYPED)
cc: Brian Waldorf	COPY TO
Enc: catalogue	ENCLOSURE

There could be other, slightly different ways of formatting a business letter, where for example paragraphs are indented or the date is typed on the right hand side.

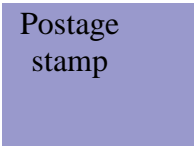
## 2 Business Letter Formats

There are certain standards for formatting a business letter, though some variations are acceptable (for example between European and North American business letters). Here are some basic guidelines:

- Use A4 (European) or 8.5 x 11 inch (North American) paper or letterhead
- Use 2.5 cm or 1 inch margins on all four sides
- Use a simple font such as Times New Roman or Arial
- Use 10 to 12 point font
- Use a comma after the salutation (Dear Mr Bond,)
- Lay out the letter so that it fits the paper appropriately
- Single space within paragraphs
- Double space between paragraphs
- Double space between last sentence and closing (Sincerely, Best wishes)
- Leave three to five spaces for a handwritten signature
- cc: (meaning "copies to") comes after the typed name (if necessary)
- enc: (meaning "enclosure") comes next (if necessary)
- Fold in three (horizontally) before placing in the envelope
- Use right ragged formatting (not justified on right side)

### Formatting Envelopes for Business Letters

It is best to type an envelope for a business letter. Most word document programs contain an envelope labelling function to help you. All you need to do is indicate the size of envelope you are using and type the correct information in the appropriate fields, for example:

Sending company's name and address is sometimes printed here	
Ms. Maggie Jones Angel Cosmetics Inc. 110 East 25th Street New York NY 10021 USA	

## **Formatting Business Email**

When using email in business, most of the guidelines for standard formatting in business letters apply. Here are a few differences:

- Choose a subject line that is simple and straightforward. Refrain from using key words that might cause an email to go into another person's trash box.
- Repeat the subject line in the body of the email, beneath the salutation (as with a letter).
- Use the "cc" address line to copy more than one person with your correspondence.
- You can request a receipt for important letters. The system will automatically let you know when someone has opened your email.
- Instead of a signature, include your typed name, and below it include your email address, business name and address, phone and fax number, and website if appropriate.
- Remember that people often print out emails, so your own email address and the subject line would be lost if you had not included them in the body of the email.

## **3 Planning a Business Letter**

A business letter is not a place for chit-chat. Unlike business conversations where a certain amount of small talk is used to break the ice, a business letter should be clear and concise. By taking time to plan your letter, you will save time in the writing and proofreading stages. During the planning stage, ask yourself a few simple questions. Jot down your answers to create an outline before you start writing.

### **Who am I writing this letter to?**

Identifying your audience always comes first. Are you writing to more than one person, to someone you don't know, or to someone you have known for a long time? This will help you determine how formal the letter needs to be. You may need to introduce yourself briefly in the letter if the recipient does not know you. You may also need to find out the updated address and title of the recipient. This is a good time to confirm the correct spelling of first and last names.

### **Why am I writing this letter?**

The main reason for the letter should be understood from the subject line and first few sentences. You may cover more than one thing in one business letter, but there will almost always be a general reason for the letter. Identify your main goal and what you hope to accomplish.

## **Are there specific details I need to include?**

Gather any dates, addresses, names, prices, times or other information that you may need to include before you write your letter. Double check details rather than relying on your memory.

## **Do I require a response?**

Many types of business letter require a response. Others are written in response to a letter that has been received. Before you start writing, determine whether or not you require an action or response from the recipient. Your request or requirement should be very clear. In some cases you may even need to provide a deadline for a response. If you do require a response, how should the recipient contact you? Indicate this information clearly as well. You may want to provide more than one option, such as an email address and a phone number.

## **How can I organize my points logically?**

Think about how you would organize your thoughts if you were speaking rather than writing to the recipient. First you would introduce yourself. Second you would state your concern or reason for writing. After the main content of your letter you would include information on how you can be contacted. The end of the letter is also a place to express gratitude, wish good-luck, or offer sympathy. Here is an example outline:

- Karen Jacobson
- Acquaintance (met twice before, briefly)
- Title: President, The Flying Club
- Address: 44 Windermere Drive, Waterloo, Ontario L1B 2C5

### **REASON**

- To invite a board member to remain on the board for a second term.
- Other members suggested that she has enjoyed this position and has been thinking about staying on.
- No other volunteers have come forward to take over at the end of September.

### **SPECIFIC DETAILS**

- If she decides to stay on she will need to be available for the national meeting on 5 November.
- Board members who stay for two terms are sometimes asked to take on extra duties, such as taking minutes or hosting social events.

### **RESPONSE**

- She will need to respond by 1 September.
- She can contact me by email or phone.

## **ORGANIZATION**

- Return address of our institution
- Karen Jacobson's title and address
- Salutation: Dear Ms. Jacobson
- First paragraph: Introduce myself briefly--remind Karen where we met before. Provide my reason for writing: "I have heard from a number of board members that you may be interested in staying on for a second term. We would be very pleased to have you stay on for another year."
- Second paragraph: Explain what type of commitment this position will involve this year (once a month meetings, national meeting, plus possible extra duties)
- Third Paragraph: Provide deadline for response and how to contact me.

Closing: Express thanks to Karen for volunteering her time this year



## 4 Letter Requesting Information

You usually write such letters when you are interested in or you need specific information about products, company, arrival time, meeting, etc. It's necessary to form and specify your request clearly.

### *SAMPLE LETTER REQUESTING INFORMATION*

**Dreamtime Movies Universal Ltd**

54 Oxford Road, Skagnes SK3 4RG  
Tel: 0223 123 4567 Fax: 0223 765 4321  
Email: info@dreamtimemovies.com.uk

Date

Lingua Services Galactic Ltd  
69 Milk Street  
LONDON SW7 6AW

Dear Sirs

Translation Brochure

I should be grateful if you would send us your brochure and price list about your translation services.

We are currently developing our sales literature and web sites and are interested in translating these into five languages apart from English.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

***Andrea Philips***

Andrea Philips  
Marketing Manager

## 5 Letter Sending Information

Usually you write such letters when responding letter requesting information or giving some details about products, meetings, company, etc.

### *SAMPLE LETTER SENDING INFORMATION*

#### **Lingua Services Galactic Ltd**

69 Milk Street, LONDON SW7 6AW, UK  
Tel: +44 20 123 4567 Fax: +44 20 765 4321  
Email: info@linguaservicesgalactic.com

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Date

Ms Andrea Philips  
Dreamtime Movies Universal Ltd  
54 Oxford Road  
Skagnes  
SK3 4RG

Dear Ms Philips

#### Translation Services & Fees

Thank you for your letter of 22 January enquiring about our translation services.

Lingua Services Galactic offer a full range of translation services to help you in the development of sales literature and web sites. I have pleasure in enclosing our latest brochures and price list from which you can see that our prices are highly competitive.

I look forward to calling you in a few days.

Yours sincerely

***James Brown***

James T Brown  
Sales Manager

Enc: 3

## 6 Price Change Notice

If you want to inform your customers about the change of your products' prices it's best to send a price change notice.

### *SAMPLE PRICE CHANGE NOTICE*

Symphony of Sound  
12 Main Street, Arrington, Tennessee, 37014  
Tel: (615) 395-8765

November 21st, 20--

Alicia Hathoway  
14 Sparks Rd  
Arrington, Tennessee, 37014

Dear Ms. Hathoway:

#### Forthcoming Price Change

Season tickets for this year's symphony are going on sale next month and we wanted you to be among the first to know.

As you probably know, rental prices have skyrocketed throughout Tennessee this year. Due to our increase in rent at the Arrington Forum, we are finding it necessary to raise the price of our season tickets from \$228 to \$275. Single viewing tickets will also be subject to a price increase.

We hope that you will consider purchasing season tickets for next year despite this change. The Arrington Symphony has been together for 23 years, and relies on season-ticket holders to fill 25% of the seating at each event. Without your support the Arrington Symphony could be forced into retirement before its 25th anniversary.

To purchase tickets for the 20-- season, please visit our website at [www.arringtonsymphony.net](http://www.arringtonsymphony.net), or call the ticket agent representative at (615) 395-8750.

We look forward to having you in our audience again next year.

Yours truly,

*Colin Fairchild*

Colin Fairchild  
Promotional Director

## 7 Letter of Invitation

Letter of Invitation is to be sent when you want to invite your co-workers, customers or clients to some business or private meetings, parties, celebrations.

### *SAMPLE LETTER OF INVITATION*

#### **PJ Party**

22 Yew Street, Cambridge, Ontario  
Tel: 416-223-8900

April 7th, 20--

Dear Valued Customer:

Our records show that you have been a customer of PJ Party Inc. since our grand opening last year. We would like to thank you for your business by inviting you to our preferred customer Spring Extravaganza this Saturday.

Saturday's sales event is by invitation only. All of our stock, including pajamas and bedding will be marked down from 50-80% off.\* Doors open at 9:00 AM sharp. Complimentary coffee and donuts will be served. Public admission will commence at noon.

In addition, please accept the enclosed \$10 gift certificate to use with your purchase of \$75 or more.

We look forward to seeing you at PJ's on Saturday. Please bring this invitation with you and present it at the door.

Sincerely,

*Linda Lane*

Linda Lane  
Store Manager

pjpartyinc@shoponline.com

\*All sales are final. No exchanges.

Enclosure: Gift Certificate #345 (not redeemable for cash)

**Some useful vocabulary:** records, preferred customer, extravaganza, by invitation only, stock, sharp, complimentary, commence, present, look forward to

## 8 Enquiry Letters

Letters of enquiry describe what the writer wants and why. The more unusual the request, the more convincing the reason needs to be. It could also be letter requesting specific information, textbooks, brochure, query about website, question regarding product components, etc.

### First Paragraph

This should tell the reader what you want; e.g.

- Please send me... (for things that the organisation offers to send)
- I would be grateful if you could tell me... (for things that are not normally offered)
- I am writing to enquire whether... (to see if something is possible)
- I would especially like to know... ( + a more detailed request)
- Could you also... ( + an additional enquiry or request)

### Second Paragraph

This paragraph tells the reader why you are contacting his or her organisation, and gives further details of the enquiry.

There are two reasons why you may contact an organisation:

1. you have contacted this organisation before, and want to again.
2. you have not contacted this organisation before, but you have heard about them. You should describe from where, such as from an advert or a recommendation; e.g.
  - I saw your advert in the HK Daily on Thursday, 22 July 2010.
  - Your company was recommended to me by Ms. Elsie Wong of Far Eastern Logistics.

### Final Paragraph

This paragraph should contain a polite expression and/or an expression of thanks to the reader. The degree of politeness (and therefore the length), depends on how unusual or difficult your request is. Possible language includes:

- Thanks. (For a very informal and normal enquiry or request)
- I look forward to hearing from you.
- I am looking forward to hearing from you.
- Thank you for your assistance.
- Thank you very much for your kind assistance.
- I appreciate that this is an unusual request, but I would be very grateful for any help you could provide. I look forward to hearing from you.

If you think the reader might have further questions, you can suggest that he or she contact you; e.g. 'If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me'.

*SAMPLE LETTERS OF ENQUIRY*

**Golden Gate Engineering**  
Prince Square, Prince Street, Kowloon

23 July 2010

ProSkills Training Centre  
Jubilee Building  
Silver Road  
Wan Chai

Dear Sir or Madam,

**Enquiry about Quality Control Course**

I am writing to enquire whether your company could offer a course on Quality Control for our managers.

I saw your advert in the HK Daily on Thursday, 22 July 2010, and the Quality Control Training Course (Ref.: QC 101 ) mentioned in the advert might be suitable for us. I would like to know if it is possible for you to offer a 3-month training course starting before or, at the latest, on Tuesday, 10 August 2010, for a group of 20. Could you send us some information about the teaching staff and the possible schedule for this course?

I am looking forward to receiving your reply.

Yours faithfully,

***Chapmen Au***

Chapmen Au  
Managing Director

Rich Lucky Trading Company  
345, Nathan Rd, Kowloon, H.K.

26 July 2010

Hi-fashion Garment Ltd  
Unit 398  
Shek Kip Mei Industrial Estate

Dear Sir or Madam

**Request for Catalogue**

Please send me your current catalogue.

Your company was recommended to me by Ms. Elsie Wong of Far Eastern Logistics. Our African customer is interested in importing a range of printed 100% cotton cloth.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours

**K.K. Chan**

K.K. Chan  
Merchandiser

## **9 Offer**

Companies write such letters when they want to offer cooperation, services, products to sell, etc. You can also write job offers.

*See general sample of offer letters on the next page.*



# General sample letter of offer

LOGO, COMPANY NAME AND ADDRESS

date

Meno a adresa firmy,  
ktorej je list určený

Subject: Offer of a product

Dear Sir or Madam,

We are writing to you to present you with an offer in the hope of future cooperation between our companies.

Our company deals with ....

We have a quality certificate according to EN ISO 9002 ... and our products have been successfully established in ... (European; international) ... markets. All our products comply with the EU technical requirements.

We would like to offer you ... (cooperation in the following area: ...; our new product; service; portfolio of products) ...

To give you a better idea of the ... (shape; size; looks; variety) ... of our products / service we are sending you a ... (photography; leaflet; brochure) ... with a description and quotation.

If you require any more information, please contact us ... (on phone number; on the following address; via e-mail) ...

We believe that you will find our offer of interest and we look forward to our cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Name and position

Enclosures:

## Sample of an offer form

An offer form we may send to our potential customer in the attachment so that he finds it easier to get acquainted with the details of our offer.

Offer no. Telephone Fax E-mail	
We offer (product):	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. according to the enclosed brochure</li> <li>2. according to the enclosed samples</li> <li>3. according to your specific requirements</li> </ol>
Quality:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. according to the samples</li> <li>2. available in first rate or standard quality</li> </ol>
Packing:	usual or according to your requirements
Quantity:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. minimum quantity:</li> <li>2. maximum quantity:</li> <li>3. no restrictions</li> <li>4. while on stock</li> </ol>
Terms of delivery:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. advance payment</li> <li>2. after receipt of order</li> <li>3. letter of credit</li> </ol>
Price:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. according to price-list</li> <li>2. price to be determined according to the size of the order</li> <li>3. bonus for new customers — 5 % deduction</li> </ol>
Terms of payment:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. as usual</li> <li>2. in advance</li> <li>3. advanced payment of 25 % on concluding the contract, balance against documents</li> </ol>
Service:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Free maintenance for one year</li> <li>2. Regular inspections our technicians</li> </ol>
Guarantee:	Six months for all kinds of products
Validity of offer:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Without engagement</li> <li>2. Binding until 1<sup>st</sup> January 2004</li> <li>3. While stocks lasts</li> <li>4. Dependent on market fluctuations</li> </ol>

# Offer of training sessions and seminars for a new client

LOGO, COMPANY NAME AND ADDRESS

5 December 2003

Audit Company  
The Training Department  
Corner Street 32  
Edinburgh EC 8110

Dear Sir or Madam,

Allow me to introduce our company. We are a small well-established educational firm that organises a variety of training sessions and seminars on current up-to-date topics. Both seminars for the public and training sessions for individual clients have become very popular.

Considering the business orientation of your company, may we offer you a variety of seminars and training sessions dealing with accounting and auditing. Moreover, let me attract your attention to a new series of training sessions of team building that belong to the one of most attended courses.

You may learn more about the content and techniques of our training sessions in the attached brochure. We recommend also visiting our web site ([www.educatetraining.com](http://www.educatetraining.com)), where you can find references from clients of our courses and several video-recordings from actual training sessions.

We believe that our offer is attractive and you will find it inspiring. Feel free to contact us either by phone or e-mail (067/221 09 89; [educate@post.com](mailto:educate@post.com)).

We look forward to our future cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Jane Sanders  
Marketing Director

Enclosure: Brochure



# Offer of a Producer for Distribution of his Product

LOGO, COMPANY NAME AND ADDRESS

6 August 2003

Bebis Ltd.  
50 Boston Street  
London W1 3SX  
United Kingdom

Subject: Offer for co-operation

Dear Customer,

A growing number of people are taking a very positive approach to fitness and health, with complementary medicines playing an increasingly important role in the world.

Our company is a market leader in the field of phytomedicines. We are a successful and rapidly expanding manufacturer of these products with our own distribution network, and we are currently looking to expand into other European markets.

You will find our extensive line of healthcare products in the enclosed brochures. We have also included a leaflet giving a detailed description of the uses of our products. If you would like further information, or would like to place a trial order, please contact us.

We are sure that the sale of our herbal cures will be a success in your market too.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Ján Malý  
Sales Department

Enclosure: brochure, leaflets

## **10 Replay to Offer**

Refusing or accepting offer you write in reply to offer. If you are pleased with the offer and interested in some further details or cooperation with a company, don't hesitate to replay and ask for more specific information.

*See general sample of replays to offer on the next page.*

# General Sample Letter of Response to an Offer – Asking for Clarification

LOGO, COMPANY NAME AND ADDRESS

Date

Ref.: Your offer of (date)

Name and address  
of the company to whom  
the letter is addressed

Dear Sir/ Madam, Dear Sirs,

Thank you very much for your offer of ... (products, services, goods). We are pleased with your offer and we would like to co-operate with you.

First, we would like to get more detailed information on ... (technical details of your products, packaging, possible discounts, alternative terms of payment, compliance of your products with the EU technical requirements ... scope of your services). Therefore, we ask you to kindly provide us with this information ... (Please send us your information brochure/kit...).

We look forward to your prompt answer.

Yours faithfully,

Name

Position in the company

Enclosure:

# General Sample Letter of Response to an Offer – Declining an Offer

LOGO, COMPANY NAME AND ADDRESS

Date

Ref.: Your offer of ...

Name and address  
of the company to whom  
the letter is addressed

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for your offer of ... (products, services, goods).

We regret to inform you that we are unable to accept your offer because ... (your prices/dates of delivery/terms of payment are unacceptable to us; your products do not comply with the EU technical requirements; our experience indicates that our customers are not interested in this kind of product).

We are unable to give you a more favourable answer.

Yours faithfully,

Name

Position in the company

Enclosure:



# Response to the Offer of Training Sessions and Seminars – Preliminary Acceptance

LOGO, COMPANY NAME AND ADDRESS

15 December 2003

Ref.: Your offer of 5 December 2003

Jane Sanders  
Marketing Director  
Educate Inc.  
School Street 1  
Edinburgh EC9 2LP

Dear Jane Sanders,

Thank you for your letter of 5 December 2003 introducing your offer of training sessions and seminars provided by your company.

We find your offer attractive concerning both its content and price range. We would be interested in starting a co-operation with you. In particular, we are interested in your team-building training sessions.

We will take your offer into consideration when preparing our new semi-annual budget for education in the second half of May next year. Therefore, we suggest that you send us your updated offer by the end of April 2004.

We hope our co-operation will prove mutually beneficial.

Yours sincerely,

Alice Learner

Director of Training Department



## 11 Order and its confirmation

An order letter, also known as a PO or purchase order letter, begins the paper trail of a specific purchase. The objective of an order letter is to provide the vendor with detailed instructions for fulfilling an order.

Order letters are very important in any business. There are obviously many different ways to write order letters, but the ideal approach for your case depends on condition and situation.

### *SAMPLE ORDER LETTER*

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Dandy Manufacturing, Inc.</b> _____</p> <p>2525 E. 34<sup>th</sup> Street Greeley, CO 80631 February 3, 2004 Better Widget Makers, Inc. 5555 Widget Avenue Silver City, CO 80456</p> <p>Attention: Sales Department</p> <p>I'd like to order the Widgets listed in the table below. The reference numbers are from your 2003 catalogue. Please include a new catalogue with my order.</p> <table><thead><tr><th><b>Quantity</b></th><th><b>Ref.#</b></th><th><b>Description</b></th><th><b>Price</b></th><th><b>Total</b></th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>100</td><td>AB045</td><td>Tiny Blue Widget</td><td>\$2.38</td><td>\$238.00</td></tr><tr><td>300</td><td>XT111</td><td>Deluxe Yellow Widget</td><td>\$4.56</td><td>\$1.368.00</td></tr><tr><td>50</td><td>NT066</td><td>Super Deluxe Red Widget</td><td>\$6.15</td><td>\$307.50</td></tr></tbody></table> <p><b>Total</b> \$1.913.50</p> <p>I would like this order to ship COD complete. If you cannot ship the complete order within 10 days, please notify me immediately. I can be reached at (303) 954-0202 #35.</p> <p>Thank you,</p> <p>Jim Dandy, Jr. General Manager</p>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Ref.#</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Price</b>	<b>Total</b>	100	AB045	Tiny Blue Widget	\$2.38	\$238.00	300	XT111	Deluxe Yellow Widget	\$4.56	\$1.368.00	50	NT066	Super Deluxe Red Widget	\$6.15	\$307.50
<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Ref.#</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Price</b>	<b>Total</b>																
100	AB045	Tiny Blue Widget	\$2.38	\$238.00																
300	XT111	Deluxe Yellow Widget	\$4.56	\$1.368.00																
50	NT066	Super Deluxe Red Widget	\$6.15	\$307.50																

# 12 Complaint

Letters of complaint usually include the following stages:

- 1 **Background**
- 2 **Problem** - cause and effect
- 3 **Solution**
- 4 **Warning** (optional)
- 5 **Closing**

## 1 **Background**

This section describes the situation; e.g.

- I am writing to inform you that the goods we ordered from your company have not been supplied correctly.
- I attended your exhibition Sound Systems 2010 at the Fortune Hotel (22-25 January) and found it informative and interesting. Unfortunately, my enjoyment of the event was spoiled by a number of organisational problems.
- I am a shareholder of Sunshine Bank and I am very concerned regarding recent newspaper reports on the financial situation of the bank. Your company is listed as the auditor in the latest annual report of the bank, so I am writing to you to ask for an explanation of the following issues.
- I am writing to inform you of my dissatisfaction with the food and drinks at the 'European Restaurant' on 18 January this year.

## 2 **Problem**

*Cause:*

- On 30 July 2010 we placed an order with your firm for 12,000 ultra super long-life batteries. The consignment arrived yesterday but contained only 1,200 batteries.
- Firstly, I had difficulty in registering to attend the event. You set up an on-line registration facility, but I found the facility totally unworkable.
- You sent us an invoice for \$10,532, but did not deduct our usual 10% discount.
- We have found 16 spelling errors and 2 mis-labelled diagrams in the sample book.

*Effect:*

- This error put our firm in a difficult position, as we had to make some emergency purchases to fulfil our commitments to all our customers. This caused us considerable inconvenience.
- Even after spending several wasted hours trying to register in this way, the computer would not accept my application.
- I am therefore returning the invoice to you for correction.
- This large number of errors is unacceptable to our customers, and we are therefore unable to sell these books.

## **4 Solution**

- I am writing to ask you to please make up the shortfall immediately and to ensure that such errors do not happen again.
- Could I please ask you to look into these matters.
- Please send us a corrected invoice for \$9,479
- I enclose a copy of the book with the errors highlighted. Please re-print the book and send it to us by next Friday.

## **5 Warning (optional)**

1. Otherwise, we may have to look elsewhere for our supplies.
2. I'm afraid that if these conditions are not met, we may be forced to take legal action.
3. If the outstanding fees are not paid by Monday, 16 August 2010, you will incur a 10% late payment fee.

## **6 Closing**

4. I look forward to receiving your explanation of these matters.
5. I look forward to receiving your payment.
6. I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

## **Politeness**

The tone of complaint letters should not be aggressive or insulting, as this would annoy the reader and not encourage them to solve the problem. In addition, questions such as 'Why can't you get this right?' should not be included.

## **Content**

- The content should contain enough details so that the receiver does not have to write back requesting more.
- Legal action is not normally threatened in the first letter of complaint, unless the situation is very serious.

*SAMPLE LETTERS OF COMPLAINT*

**Fortune Goods**  
317 Orchard Road  
Singapore

6 August 2010

Attn: Mr David Choi  
Sales Manager  
Everlong Batteries  
171 Choi Hung Road  
Hung Hom  
Hong Kong

Dear Mr Choi

**Re. Order No. 768197**

I am writing to inform you that the goods we ordered from your company have not been supplied correctly.

On 30 July 2010 we placed an order with your firm for 12,000 ultra super long-life batteries. The consignment arrived yesterday but contained only 1,200 batteries.

This error put our firm in a difficult position, as we had to make some emergency purchases to fulfil our commitments to all our customers. This caused us considerable inconvenience.

I am writing to ask you to please make up the shortfall immediately and to ensure that such errors do not happen again. Otherwise, we may have to look elsewhere for our supplies.

I look forward to hearing from you by return.

Yours sincerely

*J. Wong*

J. Wong  
Purchasing Officer

Flat 303 Lucky Mansions  
856 Cheung Sha Wan Road  
Cheung Sha Wan  
Kowloon

6 August 2010

The Administrative Officer  
Exhibition Services  
Exhibitions International  
33 Kadoorie Avenue  
Kowloon

Dear Sir/Madam

I attended your exhibition Sound Systems 2010 at the Fortune Hotel from 27 - 30 July and found it informative and interesting. Unfortunately, my enjoyment of the event was spoiled by a number of organisational problems. I explain each of the problems below.

Firstly, I had difficulty in registering to attend the event. You set up an on-line registration facility, but I found the facility totally unworkable. Even after spending several wasted hours trying to register in this way, the computer would not accept my application. I eventually succeeded in registering by faxing you.

Secondly, the exhibition was held at one of Hong Kong's most prestigious hotels, but frankly the venue was better suited to a medium-sized business conference than to a large exhibition open by registration to the public. The lack of space led to serious overcrowding in the venue, particularly at peak visiting times (i.e. lunch times and early evening). On one or two occasions I was also seriously concerned about the physical safety of attendees.

The final point I want to make concerns product information. It is very enjoyable to see and test a range of excellent sound systems, but it is also important to be able to take away leaflets on interesting products, so that more research can be done before deciding which system to buy. However, by the time I attended the exhibition all the leaflets had been taken.

Could I please ask you to look into these matters - not only on my behalf but also on behalf of other attendees, and in fact on behalf of your company, too.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

*Michael Leung*

Michael Leung

## 13 Reply to Complaint

### *Dealing with a letter of complaint:*

#### 1 Accepting a Complaint

##### Useful Expressions

Acknowledging receipt of a complaint letter

- Thank you for your letter of ... regarding / concerning / in connection with ...
- I refer to your letter of ... about / relating to ...

Apology for the error or fault

- We must apologise for ...
- We sincerely apologise for ...
- Please accept our apologies for ...
- I would like to apologise for the error made by our company in (verb+ing)

Accepting the Complaint

- We agree that the usual high standards of our products / services were not met in this instance.

A short explanation of the fault

- Introductory phrase
  - As a result of our investigation, we found that... (Not: After our investigation...)
- Causes
  - The error was caused by ... / was due to ...
  - Apparently, the problem was the result of ... / resulted from ...
  - The cause of / reason for the mistake was ...
- Effects
  - As a result ...
  - This led to ...
  - Consequently ...
- Solutions
  - We have modified / changed our ...
  - We have implemented a system to...
  - To prevent re-occurrences we have set up a verification procedure.
- Assurances
  - We assure you that this will not happen again.

Investigation to be made

- We are currently investigating the cause of ...
- We will investigate the cause of...

Proposal to settle the difficulty

- As a gesture of our regret, we are prepared to .../ we are willing to .../ we would like to ...
- To show goodwill, we will ...

An offer to take goods back, make a replacement, give a discount etc.

- We have dispatched the new items by express courier. They should arrive by Thursday, 12 August 2010.
- To show our goodwill, we would like to offer you a 5% discount on your next order with us.

Regret at dissatisfaction

- While we can understand your frustration, ...
- We understand how disappointing it can be when your expectations are not met.

## **2 Rejecting a Complaint**

### **Useful Expressions**

Rejecting responsibility for the problem leading to the complaint

- I regret to inform you that ...
- I am afraid that ...
- Unfortunately, I must point out that ...

Reasons for the rejection

- This is because the guarantee period has expired.
- This is due to the fact that the guarantee period has expired.

If a third party (another person or organisation) is to blame, direct the complainer to that party

- We therefore suggest that you contact...

A concluding paragraph aiming at retaining the goodwill of the customer

- We look forward to receiving your further orders, and assure you that they will be filled correctly / promptly.

*SAMPLE REPLAY TO A COMPLAINT*

Everlong Batteries  
171 Choi Hung Road  
Hung Hon, Hong Kong  
Tel/Fax 2235 2449  
9 Aug 2010

Mr J Wong  
Purchasing Officer  
Fortune Goods  
317 Orchard Road  
Singapore

Dear Mr Wong

**Order No. 2639/L**

Please accept our apologies for the error made by our company in filling your order no. 2639/L dated Friday, 6 August 2010.

You ordered 12,000 size Ultra super-long-life premium batteries, but our dispatch office sent 1,200. This was due to a typing error.

The balance of 10,800 batteries was dispatched by express courier to your store this morning and will arrive by Tuesday, 17 August 2010.

Since we value your business, we would like to offer you a 10% discount off your next order with us.

We look forward to receiving your further orders and assure you that they will be filled correctly.

Yours sincerely  
*David Choi*  
David Choi  
Distributions Manager



Everlong Batteries  
171 Choi Hung Road  
Hung Hon, Hong Kong  
Tel/Fax (852) 2235 2449  
9 Aug 2010

Mr J Wong  
Purchasing Officer  
Fortune Goods  
317 Orchard Road  
Singapore

Dear Mr Wong

**Order No. 2639/L**

Thank you for your letter of Friday, 6 August 2010 regarding your order no. 2639/L. We understand that this is a difficult situation for you.

We have investigated the situation, and found that you ordered 12,00 size Ultra super-long-life premium batteries. Please see the enclosed copy of your order form. Our dispatch office therefore sent 1,200.

If you need the remaining batteries urgently, the balance of 10,800 batteries can be dispatched today by express courier to your store and would arrive by Tuesday, 17 August 2010.

Please phone me at the number given above if you would like to order these batteries.

We look forward to receiving your further orders.

Yours sincerely  
*David Choi*  
David Choi  
Distributions Manager

Encl:  
- Order Form No. 2639/L

## 14 Resumes, CVs and Covering Letters in English

A *resume* or *CV* is a summary of your educational qualifications and work experience. Companies usually want to see your resume when you apply for a job. A *covering letter* is the letter that accompanies your resume when you send it to a company. Both of the documents are vitally important in the job application process.

When you apply for a job, most employers want to have 2 important documents from you:

1. **A CV or resume**
2. **A covering letter**

**First impressions are important.** Your CV and letter are usually the first impression that an employer has of you. And because an employer may have hundreds of job applications to consider, you have about 15 seconds to make sure that first impression is a good one.

**You never get a second chance to make a first impression**

### Why you need a good CV?

Your CV's job is to get you an interview.

Your CV or resume is your visiting card, your ambassador, your shop window. It represents **you** and it has a specific purpose: **to get you an interview!** To do this, it must:

- **attract**
- **inform**
- **persuade**
- **sell**

A good CV is one of your most important tools in the search for employment.

### What a CV or resume is not

A CV is not a book.

A CV is not an obstacle.

A CV is not a tombstone.

A CV is not boring or difficult to read.

A CV is not your life story or autobiography.

A CV is not a catalogue of your personal opinions.

A CV is not a list of problems with past employers.

**What a CV or resume is**

A CV is short.

A CV is seductive.

A CV is an important document.

A CV answers the question 'Why?'

A CV is interesting and easy to read.

A CV is a list of benefits for the employer.

A CV is as much about the employer as about you.

## 14.1 Covering letter

Your covering letter must sell your CV. Before even looking at your CV, an employer usually reads your covering letter. If it is badly-written, or untidy, or difficult to read, your CV will probably go into the nearest bin. If it is well-written, attractive, easy to read and persuasive, the employer will turn to your CV. It's that simple! Your Covering Letter is a sales letter.

**Covering letter** (noun): short letter sent with another document; cover letter (US)

When you send your CV to apply for a position, you should also include a short letter. This letter is called a **covering letter** or (in American English) a **cover letter**. A covering letter sent with a CV/resume is also called a **letter of application**. Your letter of application is a sales letter. The product it is selling is your CV.

### Content

The reader of your letter may be busy and unwilling to waste time on unnecessary details. You should therefore design your letter to be easy to read. It should be short, concise and relevant. It should not be too formal or complicated.

Your letter should:

1. **confirm that you are applying for the position**
2. **say where you learned about the position**
3. **say why you want the position**
4. **say why you would be a benefit to the company**
5. **request an interview**

### Format

The layout of a modern business letter in English is very simple. Your address is at the top, on the right or in the middle. The rest of the letter can be in 'block' format, with each line starting on the left. Try to keep the whole letter on one single page, with plenty of white space.

Here is the typical format for your covering letter:

<b>1 Your address telephone - fax - email</b>	
<p>Put your address + your telephone number, fax and/or email address at the top in the <u>centre</u> OR on the <u>right</u>.</p> <p><b>Do NOT put your name here.</b></p>	<p><b>1 Your address telephone fax email</b></p>
<b>2 Date</b>	<p>Do not write the date as numbers only, for two reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It can be considered too official and therefore impolite</li> <li>2. All-number dates are written differently in British English (31/12/99) and American English (12/31/99). This can lead to confusion.</li> </ol>
<b>3 Destination name and address</b>	<p>This is the name of the person to whom you are writing, his/her job title, the company name and address. This should be the same as on the envelope.</p>
<b>4 Reference</b>	<p>This is the reference number or code given by the employer in their advertisement or previous letter. You write the employer's reference in the form: 'Your ref: 01234'. If you wish to include your own reference, you write: 'My ref: 56789'.</p>
<b>5 Salutation (Dear...)</b>	<p>A letter in English always begins with 'Dea...', even if you do not know the person. There are several possibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dear Sir</li> <li>• Dear Madam</li> <li>• Dear Mr Smith</li> <li>• Dear Mrs Smith</li> <li>• Dear Miss Smith</li> <li>• Dear Ms Smith</li> </ul>
<b>6 Subject</b>	<p>The subject of your letter, which for a job application is normally the Job Title.</p>
<b>7 Body</b>	<p>The letter itself, in 3 to 6 paragraphs.</p>
<b>8 Ending (Yours...)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yours sincerely</li> <li>• Yours faithfully</li> <li>• Yours truly</li> </ul>
<b>9 Your signature</b>	<p>Sign in black or blue ink with a fountain pen.</p>
<b>10 Your name</b>	<p>Your first name and surname, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mary Smith</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• James Kennedy</li> </ul>
<b>11 (Your title)</b>	If you are using company headed paper, write your Job Title here. If you are using personal paper, write nothing here.
<b>12 Enclosures</b>	Indicate that one or more documents are enclosed by writing 'Enc: 2' (for two documents, for example).

Should your letter of application be hand-written? Probably **not**. In some cultures employers require candidates to send letters written by hand. But in the English-speaking world, an employer would usually prefer to receive a letter of application that is word-processed (that is, **produced on a computer and printed**). A hand-written letter could be considered unprofessional. You must judge according to the country, culture and tradition.

*SAMPLE COVER LETTER*

26 rue Josef  
75008 PARIS  
France  
tel: +33 1 77 77 77 77  
email: rachelking@eflnet.fr

The Principal  
Interplay Languages  
77 bd Saint Germain  
75006 PARIS

17 April 2006

Dear Madam

Director of Studies

I am interested in working as Director of Studies for your organisation. I am an EFL language instructor with nearly 10 years' experience to offer you. I enclose my resume as a first step in exploring the possibilities of employment with Interplay Languages.

My most recent experience was implementing English Through Drama workshops for use with corporate clients. I was responsible for the overall pedagogical content, including the student coursebook. In addition, I developed the first draft of the teacher's handbook.

As Director of Studies with your organisation, I would bring a focus on quality and effectiveness to your syllabus design. Furthermore, I work well with others, and I am experienced in course planning.

I would appreciate your keeping this enquiry confidential. I will call you in a few days to arrange an interview at a time convenient to you. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours faithfully

Rachel King

## 14.2 Your CV/Resume

**Curriculum Vitae** (noun): a brief account of one's education, qualifications and previous occupations. [Latin, = *course of life*]

**CV** stands for the Latin words **C**urriculum **V**itae, which mean: **the course of one's life**. A CV is also called a **résumé**, **resumé** or **resume** (especially in American English). Your CV is a summary of your professional/academic life until now, and it usually concentrates on your **personal details, education and work experience**.

Your CV's job is very simple: **to get you a job interview**. To do this, your CV must be:

- **clear**
- **well-organised**
- **easy to read**
- **concise**
- **relevant to the job offered**

### Content

Your CV is the summary of your **professional** life. You should include everything that is **relevant to your employment or career** and nothing that is irrelevant. Exactly what you include depends partly on your type of work. There are usually 5 general headings of information to include:

- **personal details** - name, address, email and telephone number (and *sometimes* nationality, age/date of birth and marital status)
- **objective** - a headline that summarises the job opportunity you are seeking
- **work experience** - your previous employment in reverse chronological order - with most detail for your present or most recent job
- **education** - details of secondary and university education - including the establishments and qualifications (but excluding any that are irrelevant to your career)
- **personal interests** - demonstrating that you are a balanced, responsible member of society with an interesting life outside work

Sometimes, you may need to give additional information for a particular job or because you have special qualifications.



## **Format**

### **Word-processed or hand-written?**

Your CV should be word-processed, for several reasons. Firstly, in the English-speaking world a hand-written CV would be considered unprofessional. Secondly, many recruitment agencies and some employers like to electronically scan CVs (they cannot do this with hand-written CVs). Thirdly, as we shall see later, it will be much easier for you to update and modify your CV to target it to a specific employer.

### **How many pages?**

Unless you are applying to be Secretary General of the United Nations, it is probably best to limit your CV to a maximum of 2 pages. Remember, your CV is a tool to get you an **interview**: it is not designed to get you the job. You can usually put everything you need to get an interview on 1 or 2 pages. If you put more than this, the employer has too much to read (and may throw your CV into the nearest bin). In addition, if you put everything in the CV, you will have nothing new to say at the interview. Be kind to employers! Leave them some questions to ask you.

### **What size paper?**

Do not be tempted to demonstrate your individuality by using a non-standard paper size: you will simply irritate the employer. There are basically 2 standard paper sizes, depending on the part of the world:

- **A4 (297 x 210 millimetres)** - used largely in Europe, including the United Kingdom
- **US Letter Size (8 1/2 x 11 inches)** - used largely in the United States

You must judge for yourself the most appropriate size for the company or companies to which you are applying.

### **What quality paper?**

Remember that your CV may be read and handled by several people. It will also be an important document during the interview that you hope to have. Choose a good quality, fairly heavy paper so that it will remain in good condition at all times. Normal photocopying paper is 80g/m<sup>2</sup> in weight. This is a little too light and will soon look creased and dirty. 100g/m<sup>2</sup> or 115g/m<sup>2</sup> would be better.

### **What sort of typeface?**

Choose an easy-to-read typeface. Typefaces are designed for specific purposes. The standard typefaces Times New Roman or Arial are perfect for your CV. Not too small, not too large! A size of 12 point would be appropriate.

**DO NOT USE ALL CAPITALS LIKE THIS! CAPITALS ARE VERY DIFFICULT TO READ AND MAY BE CONSIDERED IMPOLITE IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD.**

Do **not** use a lot of italic like *this*. Italic can also be difficult and irritating to read.

Do **not** use a fancy typeface. It is not appropriate for a professional document.

*SAMPLE CV/RESUME*

Thomas Crown

**Objective**

**Seeking an International Sales Management position in Information Technology where my extensive sales experience will be used to the full Experience**

1996-2001 Intel London, UK **National Sales Manager**

- Increased sales from £60 million to £100 million.
- Doubled sales per representative from £5 to £10 million.
- Implemented Internet sales grossing £25 million

1991-95 Teletrona Systems Edinburgh, UK **Northern Sales Manager**

- Increased regional sales from £95 million to £200 million.
- Expanded sales team from 30 to 60 representatives.
- Suggested new services adding £35 million to revenue.

1989-90 ESS Holdings Cambridge, UK **Senior Sales Representative**

- Increased sales by 300% annually.
- Closed deals with 100 major new accounts.
- Won over 25 competitor clients - adding £50 million to revenue.

1986-89 ESS Holdings Cambridge, UK **Sales Representative**

- Increased sales by 300% annually.
- Awarded company's highest sales award each year.
- Developed 'Winning Presentations' training course.

**Education** 1982-86 London University London, UK

- BA, Business Administration and Information Systems
- Captain of university Rugby Club.

1978-82 St Andrew's School Plymouth, UK

- 4 GCE 'A' Levels.
- President of school's Drama Society.

Interests: St Andrew's Board of Governors, rugby, drama, chess

**17 King's Terrace, Richmond, Surrey, UK**

**Tel: +44 181 123 456 Email: [thomas.crown@interwell.net](mailto:thomas.crown@interwell.net)**

In general, 5 or 6 headings will be enough for most resumes or CVs. However, sometimes you will want to use more headings - when applying for a particular job for which additional information is appropriate. Here is a CV layout with most of the possible headings that you can choose from.

[white]	'Standard' headings that you find on most CVs.
[grey]	'Extra' headings that you can add if necessary.

Your name First name Surname (for example, John Brown)		Include a <b>good</b> photo if you want or if requested
<b>Address</b>	17 Any Road, ANYTOWN, Anycountry	
<b>Telephone</b>	+44 171 123 4567	
<b>Fax</b>	+44 171 123 4567	
<b>Email</b>	myname@anydomain.net	
Personal Information	<b>Marital status:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• single</li> <li>• married</li> <li>• divorced</li> <li>• separated</li> <li>• widowed</li> </ul>
	<b>Nationality:</b>	French
	<b>Date of birth:</b>	State your date of birth in the form 1 January 1975 or January 1st, 1975
	<b>Age:</b>	28
	<b>Place of birth:</b>	Town, Country
<b>Objective</b>	State the position or opportunity that you are looking for. (This must be <b>short</b> . One or two lines only.)	
<b>Summary of qualifications</b>	Make a short list of the qualifications you have for this job. (This should be <b>short</b> . Your full qualifications will appear later under 'Education').	
<b>Professional experience</b>	List your jobs in reverse chronological order (last is first).	
<b>Education</b>	List your university/school in reverse chronological order (last is first).	

<b>Specialized skills</b>	Any additional special abilities you have (for example, computer programming) that may be <b>of interest</b> to the employer.
<b>Patents and publications</b>	List any <b>relevant</b> inventions you have made or books, articles and papers you have published.
<b>Additional professional activities</b>	List any <b>relevant</b> work activities not listed elsewhere.
<b>Professional memberships</b>	List any <b>relevant</b> professional associations or clubs of which you are a member.
<b>Extracurricular activities</b>	List any <b>relevant</b> activities that you have outside work.
<b>Volunteer experience</b>	List any <b>relevant</b> activities (present or past) that you have done unpaid.
<b>Awards received</b>	List any <b>relevant</b> awards or prizes.
<b>Accreditations</b>	List any official recognition of you by a <b>relevant</b> organization.
<b>Security clearance</b>	For certain jobs with government or companies contracted by government, it may be necessary to state your level of authorization to work on classified or confidential projects.
<b>Civil service grades</b>	<b>If relevant</b> , list your grades or levels as a civil servant (that is, state employee).
<b>Community activities</b>	List anything you do for your local community (for example church or school) <b>if</b> it is <b>important or relevant</b> for this job.
<b>Languages</b>	If necessary, list the languages you can speak. You can use the following descriptions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mother tongue</li> <li>• fluent</li> <li>• excellent</li> <li>• good</li> <li>• some knowledge</li> </ul>
<b>Travel</b>	Details of travel and exposure to cultural experiences that may <b>support</b> your application.
<b>Interests and activities</b>	List things that you like or like doing (for example governor of local school, going to opera, drama or tennis).
<b>Hobbies</b>	List your favourite leisure-time activities (for example, stamp-collecting). You should include this only <b>if you think it will be</b>

	<b>interesting</b> for the employer. You may prefer to include this under 'Interests and activities'.
<b>Additional information</b>	Add any additional information that is <b>necessary and relevant</b> for a particular job.
<b>References</b>	If required, give the names and addresses of (two) people who can give you a reference. Alternatively, you can state 'Available on request.'

### **Do this...**

- Do be positive.
- Do look forward to the future.
- Do emphasize the benefit you will bring to an employer.
- Do use active verbs.
- Do keep to the point. Be relevant.
- Do create an organised layout.
- Do be neat.
- Do use good quality paper.
- Do use a word-processor (computer).
- Do use wide margins.
- Do use plenty of white space.
- Do use a good quality photo (if you use a photo).
- Do check your work for spelling errors.
- Do check your work for grammatical errors.
- Do ask a friend to look at your CV and letter.
- Do sign your letter with a fountain pen.

### **Don't do this...**

- Don't look backward to the past.
- Don't write CV or Resume at the top.
- Don't write Mr, Mrs or Miss in front of your name.
- Don't give personal details (place of birth, age etc) unless necessary.
- Don't give full addresses of past employers.
- Don't give minor or unimportant school qualifications.
- Don't give lots of irrelevant or unimportant hobbies.
- Don't write names in capital letters.
- Don't use lots of different typefaces (fonts) and sizes.
- Don't use lots of capital letters, italics or fancy typefaces.

Don't use coloured paper.

Don't make your covering letter more than 1 page.

Don't make your CV/resume more than 2 pages.

## Vocabulary

Use action verbs.

## The Value of Simplicity and Clarity

If you want people to read your CV, your language must be **simple** and **clear**:

- Use **short words** and **short sentences**.
- Do not use **technical vocabulary**, unless you are sure that the reader will understand it.
- Talk about concrete **facts** ('I increased sales by 50%'), not abstract **ideas** ('I was responsible for a considerable improvement in our market position').
- Use verbs in the **active** voice ('I organised this exhibition'), not **passive** voice ('This exhibition was organised by me'). Generally, the active voice is more powerful, and easier to understand.

## The Power of Action Verbs

Certain words are used frequently by recruiters in their job descriptions. You can study recruiters' advertisements and job descriptions and **try to use these words** in your CV and covering letter.

The most **powerful words** are *verbs*. And the most **powerful verbs** are *action* verbs. (Action verbs describe dynamic activity, not state).

<b>Verbs of action</b>	to sell, to manage
<b>Verbs of state</b>	to be, to exist

**So you should use plenty of action verbs *matched to your skills*, and use them in the active form, not the passive form.** Which of these two sentences do you think is the more powerful?

<b>Active form</b>	<b>I increased</b> sales by 100%.
<b>Passive form</b>	Sales <b>were increased</b> by 100%.

## Power Words to Use

Here is a list of typical **action verbs** categorised by **skill**:

Communication skills	Management skills	Research skills	Technical skills
address	assign	collect	assemble
arbitrate	attain	critique	build
correspond	chair	define	calculate
draft	coordinate	detect	devise
edit	delegate	diagnose	engineer
lecture	direct	evaluate	fabricate
mediate	execute	examine	maintain
motivate	organise	explore	operate
negotiate	oversee	extract	overhaul
persuade	plan	identify	program
present	recommend	inspect	remodel
publicise	review	interpret	repair
reconcile	strengthen	investigate	solve
speak	supervise	summarise	upgrade
write	train	survey	
Creative skills	Financial skills	Sales skills	Teaching skills
conceptualise	administer	sell	advise
create	allocate	convert	clarify
design	analyse	close	coach



fashion	appraise	deal	elicit
form	audit	persuade	enable
illustrate	balance	highlight	encourage
institute	budget	satisfy	explain
integrate	calculate	win over	facilitate
invent	control	sign	guide
originate	compute		inform
perform	develop		instruct
revitalise	forecast		persuade
shape	project		stimulate
			train

## British and American English

There are sometimes differences between British and American English and conventions. Here is a guide to some of the most important differences for your CV/resume and covering letter. But remember, this is a **guide only** - there are no strict rules. For example, some British people like to use 'American' words, and some American people like to use 'British' words.

British	American
CV/curriculum vitae	resumé
	resume
covering letter	cover letter
	covering letter
Standard paper size: A4 (210 x 297 millimetres)	Standard paper size: Letter (8 1/2 x 11 inches)
Mrs	Ms
Miss	
Dear Sirs	Gentlemen
Yours faithfully	Yours truly

Yours sincerely	Sincerely
	Sincerely yours
	Yours truly
Managing Director (MD)	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
	General Manager
date format: DD/MM/YY example: 30/12/99 30 December 1999	date format: MM/DD/YY example: 12/30/99 December 31st, 1999
labour	labor

## CVs/Resumes for the 21st Century

In the past it was usual to produce your CV/resume and covering letter on paper and submit them by post (snailmail) or fax. Today, it is increasingly usual for companies to ask you to send your CV by **email** or for candidates to place their CV on a **webpage**. These are two excellent ways of distributing your CV, but there are several important points that you should not overlook.

### Email

When you send your CV by email, you can send it either as inline text (that is, written in the body of the email) or as a file attached to the email (or as a combination of these).

In all cases, please make sure that the **subject line** is clear, and relevant. Your prospective employer may receive hundreds of CVs by email and many will have subject headings like:

- CV
- Job Application
- John Brown
- JB
- Your Vacancy

You can imagine how frustrating it is to sort emails with meaningless subject lines like these (or, worse still, no subject line at all, as sometimes happens). If your name is "John Brown", a good subject line would be:

- Resume: John Brown
- CV & Covering Letter: John Brown
- Job Application: John Brown
- Application for Post of Sales Manager: John Brown

## Inline text

It is best to use "plain text". Yes, you **can** write your email in "HTML" or "Rich Text", but will your prospective employer be able to read it? Will it arrive correctly formatted? Will colours, typefaces, tabs and spacing, and any special characters like fancy accents be correctly presented? Perhaps yes. Perhaps no. Unless you are certain that what you write will be seen as you intended, you cannot take the chance with such an important document. Plain text, on the other hand, can be read by virtually all email programs world-wide and you can be confident that what you send is what arrives at the other end. However, even with plain text it is advisable to:

1. **Keep the line-length short.**  
Use hard carriage returns (the "Enter" key) every 65 characters maximum.
2. **Avoid fancy spacing and tabulation.**  
A CV/resume that is beautifully formatted in MS Word or some other word-processing program cannot be reproduced with the same layout in plain text. You should not even attempt it. Instead, you will need a different, simpler approach, similar to the one below.

Formatted document:

2005-	<b>Sales Manager</b>	United Technologies Universal Ltd	London, UK
2000-2005	<b>Sales Representative</b>	Wonder Techniques Inc.	New York, USA

Plain text email:

2005 to date  
Sales Manager  
United Technologies Ltd (London, UK)

2000-2005  
Sales Representative  
Wonder Techniques Inc. (New York, USA)

## Attachments

You should be very careful about sending your CV as an attachment. Many people are very cautious about opening attachments, largely because they can contain viruses, and your email with an uninvited CV attachment may well be deleted before it ever sees the light of day. If you are sure that your prospective employer will accept attachments, then this can be a good way to submit your CV and covering letter.

Be careful too that your documents are properly laid out with a file format that can be read by your prospective employer. An MS Word document (.doc) is almost certain to be readable by anyone, on PC or Mac. Better still, convert it to the universal Rich Text Format (.rtf). If you send your CV produced on some obscure word processing program, and do not convert it to RTF, then do not be surprised if you never hear from your prospective employer again.

Another word of caution: like the subject line for your email, be sure to give your attached files meaningful names. Do not simply attach a file called "CV.doc" or "coveringletter.doc". Once it has been saved to your prospective employer's hard disk, the name will be meaningless, unless they have taken the trouble to change it. But you should not give them this trouble. Instead, call your attachments something like:

- Resume\_John-Brown.doc
- CV-and-Covering-Letter\_John-Brown.doc
- job-application\_john-brown.rtf
- JohnBrown\_Application-for-Post-of-Sales Manager.rtf

## **Webpage**

It can be a very good idea to place your CV on the Web. This makes access to your CV easy and rapid world-wide. If you wish to retain confidentiality, you can always password protect it. Unfortunately, many people suddenly become artistic as soon as they add pages to the Web. They believe that they can somehow enhance their CV by adding colour, or unusual typefaces, or fancy backgrounds. They pay for their artistry in illegibility. If there is one, immutable law of the Universe, it is that contrast between text and background increases legibility (readability). In general, black text on a plain white background is the easiest text to read. (That is why books, newspapers and magazines the world over are printed in black text on white paper, except for some very special effect.) Remember, too, that a prospective employer may wish to print out your CV, and will almost certainly prefer to have a result that looks more conventional.