

English Corner



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I. What is Business English?

Business English (商業英語) is English that fulfills work-related needs (工作上的需要). There are both spoken needs and written needs in the workplace; these include phone conversations, presentations, meetings, negotiations, interviews, and email communication, letters, reports, persuasive communication (e.g. sales letters, leaflets, proposals and advertisements) and visual communication.

The purpose of business communication (商業溝通的目的) is to convey messages in a **clear** (清晰), **concise** (簡單易明) and **courteous way** (有禮). In this issue and the next few issues, I will illustrate the features of business English with examples. There will be a short quiz at the end to check your understanding. Are you ready?

II. Rule 1: Be Simple

- a. The business world has changed greatly in the past century or two; the following old-fashioned/outdated expressions or business jargon should no longer be used.

| Business Jargon (商業術語) | Simple English (簡明英語) |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Esteemed Sir | Dear Sir/Madam |
| enclosed herewith | I enclose |
| at your earliest convenience | as soon as possible |

| Business Jargon (商業術語) | Simple English (簡明英語) |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| in the event that | if |
| due to the fact that | as/because/since |
| it has come to our attention that | we note that |
| we are in receipt of | we have received |

- b. In business communication, use familiar words which have simpler synonyms to convey clear messages. Don't, however, give up a precise word to convey exactly what you mean. Look at the following examples:

| Unfamiliar words | Familiar synonyms (同義詞) |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| stipulate (e.g. regulations/laws stipulate that...) | require |
| terminate | stop |
| monitor | check |
| utilize | use |
| encompass | include |

III. Rule 2: Be Concise

Conciseness means using the least number of words to express the most meaning. Reduce redundant words as in the following examples:

1. The universities will **merge together** (合併在一起) soon.

The universities will **merge** soon.

Remark: Delete *together*.

2. **Past experience** (過去的經驗) is invaluable.

Experience is invaluable.

Remark: Delete *past* (經驗當然是過去的).

3. Please **sign your name** here.

Please **sign** here.

Remark: Delete *your name*.

4. I **am of the belief that** he is suitable.

I **believe** that he is suitable.

Remark: Use the single word *believe*.



Quiz:

Rewrite the following sentences to make them simple and concise (answers as below).

1. Kindly advise us at your earliest convenience if you are interested in our products.
2. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to join our company.

Key:

1. Please let us know as soon as possible if you are interested in our products.
2. I would like to invite you/I invite you to join our company.

References:

Bilbow, G. (2004). *Business Writing for Hong Kong*. 3rd Edition. Hong Kong: Longman

Guffey, M.E. (2004). *Essentials of business communication*. 6th Edition. Mason, Ohio: South-Western College Pub.