



International Correspondence

In the globalized market, it is imperative that you consider cultural and language differences in all of your business communication. Remember to always research your audience before sending written communication.

1. **Cultural Differences:** Become aware of the recipient's customs inside and outside of business, paying special attention to the customs that affect communication. Consider the following:
 - A. Direct versus indirect introductions.
 - B. Logic patterns—general to specific versus specific to general.
 - C. First or last name usage.

2. **Language Differences:** If you are not using a translator, make certain that you are writing as clearly as possible.
 - A. Avoid American idioms, clichés, metaphors, slang, or colloquialisms because figurative language does not translate well. Instead, the literal meaning will be translated and your reader will be confused.
 - B. Avoid humor, irony, and sarcasm because your audience members may become confused or offended. Sarcasm is especially misunderstood outside its cultural reference.
 - C. Avoid contractions, because if your audience member is reading the letter he or she may not understand the use of the contractions, and if the correspondence is being translated, the translator may not translate the complete contraction, so “don't” may become “do.”
 - D. Avoid long sentences that may have multiple clauses between the subject and verb. Try bulleting the clauses for readability.
 - E. Write as specifically as possible.
 - F. Learn the country's conventions for writing dates, times, and measurements.
 - G. Learn the customary titles of respect and use them in your correspondences.
 - H. Use active voice whenever possible, because active voice is easier to understand for non-native English speakers.
 - I. If you are using graphics, make sure that the graphics are not culturally specific.
 - J. Define abbreviations and acronyms, or better yet, avoid them.

3. **Research:**
 - A. Talk to people in your company who may have already worked with people from that particular culture.
 - B. Do research in basic guidelines for communicating with people from other cultures. (Reputable websites can provide you with reliable information.)