**BUSINESS LETTER: ENQUIRIES**

An enquiry (also spelt as inquiry) is sent when a businessman wants some information, especially about:

• the supply of goods

• leaflets or catalogues

• quotation or prices

• samples

• terms and discounts

• availability of goods

• delivery terms and deadlines

• method of transportation

• insurance

These letters are often written in response to an advertisement that we have seen in the paper, a magazine, a commercial on television when we are interested in purchasing a product, but would like more information before making a decision.

The contents of an enquiry will depend on three things: how well you know the supplier, whether the supplier is based in your country or abroad, and the type of goods or services you are enquiring about.

A businessman will save unnecessary correspondence by giving full details that are relevant. If a prospective customer approaches suppliers for the first time, it is useful to tell them something about his own business, the kind of goods he needs and for what purpose they are required. In the case of customers of long-standing or repeat orders, the inquiry may be very simple.

**I. Introductory or Opening Phrases**

*- We (have) read your advertisement in …of …*

*- With regard to your advertisement in … of …, we would ask you …*

*- We have heard of your products from …*

*- We have seen your current catalogue showing …*

**II. Information about your company and the market you work in**

Tell your supplier what sort of organization you are.

*- We would like to introduce the goods…*

*- As distributors we have a large network of…*

*- We are distributors/importers/retailers etc. of …and would like to get in touch with suppliers/manufactures of…*

*- There is a (large) promising market here for good quality … and we may be able to place large orders with you…*

*- There is a large market here for your product…*

*- We would like to contact manufacturers (suppliers, sellers etc) of …*

*- Our company was founded in …*

*- For over … years our company has imported from western companies…*

*- We are in the market for … years …*

*- We are a co-operative wholesale society based in…*

*- Our company is a subsidiary of Universal Business Machines and we specialize in...*

*- We are one of the main producers of industrial chemicals in Germany and we are interested in...*

It might be useful to point out that you know the suppliers’ associates, or that they were recommended to you by a consulate or trade association.

*- We were given your name by… in Paris.*

*- You were recommended to us by…*

*- We were advised by… that you are interested in supplying…*

It is possible to use other references.

*- We were impressed by the selection of gardening tools displayed on your stand at this year's Hamburg Gardening Exhibition.*

*- Our associates in the packaging industry speak highly of your Zeta packing machines, and we would like to have more information about them. Could you send us...?*

**III. A request for additional information**

*- We are interested in buying (importing)…*

*- Please let us know what quantities you are able to deliver till/by…*

*- We would like to have further details about …*

*- What quantities are you able to supply from stock?*

*- Please, send us samples /of your (catalogues, price list etc.).*

*- Please, send us a price-list and samples of …*

*- Could you let us have a quotation for …*

*- Would you please let us have your current catalogue showing …*

*- We would be glad to receive specifications of your new items/ your current export price list/detail of trade discounts?*

*- We are also interested in your terms of payment and in discounts offered for regular purchases and large orders.*

*- We normally effect payment by Letter of Credit.*

*- Payment will be made by cheque /bank transfer.*

When asking for goods or services you should be specific and state exactly what you want. If replying to an advertisement, you should mention the journal or newspaper and its date, and quote any box number or department number given, eg. *Box No. 341; Dept 4/128*. And if ordering from, or referring to, a catalogue, brochure, or prospectus, always quote the reference, *Cat. no. A149; Item no. 351; Course BL 362.*

*- I am replying to your advertisement in the June edition of…. I would like to know more about… which you are offering at cost price.*

*- I will be attending the auction to be held at Turner House on 16 February, and am particularly interested in the job lot listed as Item No.351.*

*- Could you please give me more information about course BL 362, which appears in the language-learning section of your summer prospectus?*

*- I would appreciate more details about… which you are currently advertising on y our website.*

**Asking for****catalogues, price lists, etc.**

When asking for *catalogues*, *price lists*, etc. it is very helpful to point out briefly any particular items you are interested in.

*- Could you please send your current catalogue and price list for…? We are particularly interested in….*

*- We have heard about your… and would like more details. Please send us any information you can supply.*

*- I am planning to come and study in London next autumn and would be grateful if you could send me a prospectus and details of your fees. I am particularly interested in courses in computing.*

*- Please would you send me an up-to-date price list for your building materials?*

**Asking for samples, patterns, and demonstrations**

You might want to see what material or item looks like before placing an order. Most suppliers are willing to provide samples or patterns so that you can make a selection. However, few would send a complex piece of machinery for you to look at. Instead, you would probably be invited to visit a showroom, or the supplier would offer to send a representative. In any case, if it is practical, ask to see an example of the article you want to buy.

*- When replying, could you please enclose a pattern card?*

*- We would also appreciate it if you could send some samples of the materials so that we can examine the texture and quality.*

*- Before selling… we prefer to test them for safety. Could you therefore send us at least two examples of …?*

**Suggesting terms, methods of payment, and discounts**

Companies sometimes state prices and conditions in their advertisements or literature and may not like prospective customers making additional demands. However, even if conditions are quoted, you can mention that you usually expect certain concessions and politely suggest that, if your terms were met, you would be more likely to place an order.

*- We usually deal on a 30% trade discount basis with an additional quantity discount for orders over 1,000 units.*

*- As a rule, our suppliers allow us to settle by monthly statement and we can offer the usual references if necessary.*

*- We would also like to point out that we usually settle our accounts on a D/A, basis with payment by 30-day bill of exchange.*

*- Could you let us know if you allow cash discounts?*

*- As we intend to place a substantial order, we would like to know what quantity discounts you allow.*

**Asking for goods on approval, or on sale or return**

Sometimes retailers and wholesalers want to see how a line will sell before placing a firm order with a supplier. Two ways of doing this are by getting goods on approval or on a sale or return basis. In either case the supplier would have to know the customer well, or would want trade references. The supplier would also place a time limit on when the goods must be returned or paid for.

*- The leaflet advertising … interested us, and we would like to stock a selection of them. However, we would only consider placing an order if it was on the usual basis of sale or return. If this is acceptable, we will send you a firm order.*

*- In the catalogue we received from you last week, we saw that you are introducing a new line in … . Would it be possible for you to supply us with a range on an approval basis to see if we can encourage a demand? Three months would probably be enough to establish a market if there is one.*

**IV. Closing**

Usually a simple “*thank you”* is sufficient to close in an enquiry. However, you could mention that a prompt reply would be appreciated, or that certain terms or guarantees would be necessary.

*- We hope to hear from you in the near future.*

*- We would be grateful for an early reply.*

*- Thank you in advance for any information you can give us.*

*- Any early answer would be appreciated.*

*- We look forward to receiving your quotation (catalogue).*

*- We look forward to your early reply.*

*- Your prompt answer would be appreciated.*

*- We look forward to hearing from you.*

*- Finally, we would like to point out that delivery before Christmas is essential, and hope that you can offer us that guarantee.*

*- If you can agree to the concessions we have asked for, we will place a substantial order.*

*- Prompt delivery would be necessary as we have a rapid turnover. We would therefore need your assurance that you could meet all delivery dates.*

You can also indicate further business or other lines you would be interested in. If a supplier thinks that you may become a regular customer, they will be more inclined to quote competitive terms and offer concessions.

*- If the product is satisfactory, we will place further orders with you in the future.*

*- If the prices quoted are competitive and the quality up to standard, we will order on a regular basis.*

*- Provided you can offer favorable quotations and guarantee delivery within four weeks from receipt of order, we will place regular orders with you.*

*- We may be able to have regular orders if:*

*■ your prices are competitive;*

*■ the samples meet the standards;*

*■ the samples meet with our customer’s approval;*

*■ the samples complies with our requirements.*

**V. Sample Letters**

**Letter 1**

MATTHEWS & WILSON

Ladies’ Clothing

421 Michigan Avenue

Chicago, III. 60602

October 12, 2015

Mr. James Green

Marketing Director

Green Industries Ltd.

148 Mortimer Street

London WIC 37D

England

**Dear Sir!**

We saw your women’s dresses and suits at the London Fashion Show held in New York on October 10. The lines you showed for teenagers, the “Swinger” dresses and trouser suits, would be most suitable for our market.

Would you kindly send us your quotation for spring and summer clothing that you could supply to us by the end of January next year. We would require 2000 dresses and suits in each of the sizes 10 – 14, and 500 in sizes 8 and 16. Please quote c.i.f. Chicago prices. Payment is normally made by Letter of Credit.

Thank you for an early reply.

Very truly yours,

P.Wilson

P.Wilson

Sales Manager

**Letter 2**

Dreamtime Movies Universal Ltd

54 Oxford Road

Skagnes SK3 4RG

England  
Tel: 0223 123 4567 Fax: 0223 765 4321

Email: info@dreamtimemovies.com.uk

25 May 2016

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

**Points to remember when writing an enquiry letter**

1. Give details of your own company as well as asking for information from your prospective supplier.

2. Be specific and state exactly what you want. If possible, quote box numbers, catalogue references, etc. to help your supplier identify the product/s.

3. Ask for a sample if you are uncertain about a product.

4. Suggest terms and discounts, but be prepared for the supplier to make a counteroffer.

5. Close with an expression such as *I look forward to hearing from you* and/or indicate the possibility of substantial orders or further business.