

Instructions from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Rectifying Textual Deficiencies in Telegrams, Reports, Instructions, and Decisions (1 February 1951)

To: All departments of the Central Committee and the Military Commission, party groups of the State Council, various central bureaus, major military regions, branches, major city committees, provincial committees, district party committees, county committees, military regions, corps, and government party groups above the level of commissioner, as well as responsible comrades of mass organizations' party groups:

The "Instructions on Rectifying Textual Deficiencies in Telegrams, Reports, Instructions, and Decisions" now circulating among party, government, and military telegrams and other reports, instructions, and decision documents are generally well-written and effective. Many telegrams or documents are clear, vivid, and easy to read, thus achieving great results. However, at the same time, there are still many documents with serious textual deficiencies that must be corrected. The most common deficiencies include excessive use of ellipsis, incomplete syntax, unclear explanations, lack of clarity, and excessive length. The methods for rectification are as follows:

(1) Excessive use of ellipsis is not allowed.

Many telegrams and documents now excessively use ellipsis for names of individuals, places, dates, organizations, and objects, making it difficult for readers to remember and guess, sometimes completely bewildering. This phenomenon should be corrected according to the following rules:

a. Except for certain well-known central comrades, certain comrades of various central bureaus and central branches, and commanders and political commissars of field armies (major military regions), who sometimes (not always, not most of the time) may sign their surname only in telegrams or documents, or add their title after their surname, such as "Chairman Mao," "Premier Zhou," "Chen Rao," "Peng Xi," etc., in general, regardless of whether it is in the telegram text or the signature, names must be written in full, and surnames alone are not allowed. When necessary, titles should be added before the name, such as "Yang Xiufeng, Chairman of the People's Government of Hebei Province," "Chen Pixian, Secretary of the Party Committee of the Sunan District," "Commander Yang Dezhi and Political Commissar Li Zhimin of the Nineteenth Corps."

b. Place names must be written in full, such as "Shanghai," "Fuzhou," "Guangzhou," "Chongqing," and not abbreviated as "Hu," "Rong," "Sui," "Yu." "Fujian" should not be written as "Min," and "Hunan" should not be written as "Xiang." Only when two or more famous cities or provinces are combined to make it clear at a glance, such as "Beijing-Tianjin," "Shanghai-Nanjing," "Henan-Hubei-Hunan-Jiangxi," "Guangdong-Guangxi border," or when combined with other words to become popular special terms, such as "Shanghai East," "Anhui North," "Tianjin-Pukou Railway," "Tianjin-Lanzhou Railway," etc., may abbreviated forms be used.

c. The date must be indicated for all telegrams. The date and time must be indicated for urgent telegrams. The date must be indicated for official documents. For the date and time, Arabic numerals should be used in general, and not the Chinese zodiac and rhyme. For example, "February 1st, 14:00" should not be abbreviated as "Chou Dong Wei."

d. The names of organizations should be written in full. For example, "Organization Department and Propaganda Department of the Northeast Bureau" should not be abbreviated as "Northeast Org-Prop," "Air Force Command" should not be abbreviated as "Air Cmd," and "All-China Federation of Trade Unions" should not be abbreviated as "ACFTU."

e. Unless the abbreviation is widely known to the people nationwide, such as "CPC" and "Anti-Imperialist," and can be used in informal settings, all other terms must be written in full. For example, "rent reduction and interest reduction" and "production and disaster relief" should not be abbreviated as "double reduction" and "life-saving," and "bandits and spies" (referring to bandits and spies), or "spy bandits" (referring to spies as bandits) should not be abbreviated as "bandit spy." In all official telegrams, abbreviations should be avoided as much as possible. For example, Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin should not be abbreviated as "Ma, En, Le, Si," and American imperialism should not be abbreviated as "American Emperor."

f. For any particularly obscure terms that most readers cannot understand, necessary explanations must be provided.

(2) Grammatical rules must be followed.

Although telegram sentences should strive for conciseness, they must not violate grammar. Necessary subjects, verbs, and objects must be complete and accurate. Single and compound sentences must be clearly distinguished. Pronouns must be closely followed by the nouns they represent. Adjective and adverb endings should preferably use "的" and "地" to distinguish (adjectives describe nouns, so "的" is used before nouns, for example, "Imperialism is moribund capitalism," so "的" is used before nouns. Adverbs mainly describe verbs, so "地" is used before verbs, for example, "Resolutely overthrow imperialism," so "地" is used before verbs). Only in this way can the structure be clear and the meaning determined.

As for letters and publicly announced documents, not only must the wording be complete, but the punctuation must also be correct. To solve this problem, the People's Daily will soon publish a series of grammar lectures, and it is hoped that the entire party will pay attention to them. It is also hoped that responsible cadres above the county committee level, military officers above the division level, and at least one person in each organization will learn grammar so that they can be responsible for correcting telegram wording.

(3) Rectify the phenomenon of unclear explanations.

a. All telegrams requesting instructions must clearly state the situation and their own requirements and opinions (when forwarding lower-level telegrams requesting instructions, their own opinions should also be stated), and specify which agency or individual they hope will respond to what questions and when. All telegrams responding to requests must clearly state which agency or individual raised what questions and when. For telegrams instructing others, the requirements for subordinates must also be clearly specified. For example, it should specify which agency should handle it and when to report on the progress, etc. In short, each matter must explain the "what," "who," "when," "where," "how," and "why" six aspects. Only when it is absolutely clear can some parts be omitted.

b. In order to facilitate clear explanations, apart from comprehensive reports and instructions, the one-issue-one-report system must be strictly implemented, and it is forbidden to include several unrelated matters in one telegram or to use internal party telegrams to substitute for external ones.

c. Regardless of whether it is a report, request for instructions, or instructions, if it is necessary to inform not only one person or agency but also others, it should be written after the responsible person or agency, "and inform," and then write the others or other agencies to clarify responsibility.

d. When forwarding telegrams, whether in full or in summary, the recipient's person or agency, the reason for forwarding the telegram, the person or agency forwarding it, and the time of forwarding should be written before the forwarded telegram to clarify the context, and the upper and lower parts of the forwarded telegram and the date should be retained without omission.

e. When quoting sentences from others or other agencies' telegrams in telegrams, first write who said it, which agency, and when, then write the quoted sentence in quotation marks (brackets), followed by "and so on." If the content of the quoted sentence is not an opinion but a description of events, write "and so on." Below, write your own opinion to clarify the context.

(4) Rectify the phenomenon of unclear explanations.

Except for brief ones, all longer telegrams should open with a clear statement of the main points, that is, at the beginning, use extremely concise sentences to state the purpose or conclusion of the entire document (now known in journalism as a "lead," which is what the ancient Chinese called "establishing a summary to serve as the mainstay of the article," arousing the reader's attention and giving the reader a general idea of what follows). Then, provide necessary explanations.

When dividing long telegrams into paragraphs, the same method should be used for each paragraph. When a telegram has several layers of meaning or several requests, attention must be paid to organizing them in a systematic manner, and paragraphs and items should be numbered.

(5) All telegrams must be carefully condensed. Leading comrades at all levels have heavy responsibilities and busy affairs. When asking for instructions or reporting to leading comrades or agencies, both tendencies must be opposed: the tendency to ask for instructions or report when necessary and not when necessary, and the tendency to ask for instructions or report indiscriminately when not necessary. When drafting telegrams requesting instructions or reports, attention must be paid to concise wording, clear organization, and ease of reading. Many telegrams now are not only too long but also disorderly. The reason is that they have not been condensed, and many unnecessary words have been spoken, or the organization has not been clear, and the messy draft has been sent casually. As a result, leading comrades find it difficult to read these telegrams, or they don't read them at all, which is as good as writing them in vain. In the future, all telegrams requesting instructions from higher-level agencies or reporting on situations to lower-level agencies, all comrades responsible for drafting and

reviewing telegrams must, with a sense of responsibility, clearly organize the structure, condense the wording, and then send them out, otherwise they should be criticized. However, condensation means clarifying the structure, eliminating empty words, and not omitting essential parts of speech, violating grammar, or disregarding the imagery and vividness of the wording. Some well-written reports, although long, can attract readers and make them not weary of reading. Some poorly written reports, although not long, are hard to read. The difference lies in whether there is organization, whether there is empty talk, and whether it conforms to grammar.

All of the above items should be earnestly implemented by party committees at all levels.

In order to smoothly implement this directive, responsible comrades at all levels should distribute this directive to all comrades responsible for drafting and reviewing telegrams in various agencies, convey it at appropriate meetings, and publish it in party publications.

To ensure effective implementation, the Central Committee has instructed the General Office of the Central Committee and the General Offices of various central bureaus to conduct the first inspection of telegrams received from January to April of this year by the end of April, according to the standards set forth in this directive. Those agencies that implement them well will be commended, and those that do not will be criticized. Three inspections will be conducted in 1951, and the final one will be the annual comprehensive inspection. A summary must be written each time, approved by the Central Committee, and reported to all major leading agencies of the party.

The Central Committee believes that correcting these textual deficiencies will make our comrades' minds more precise and improve work efficiency, so it must be taken seriously and the existing deficiencies must be earnestly reformed. When educating comrades, several documents that generally meet the above standards should be selected as examples for reading and explanation by someone, which is an effective method of education.

Central Committee of the Communist Party of China

Note: This directive from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China was drafted under the direction of Mao Zedong. The text in regular font in this document was written or revised by Mao Zedong. At that time, this directive was not publicly released but was circulated internally as a document to various levels of party committees and affiliated departments. On February 25, 1951, Mao Zedong wrote to Hu Qiaomu, Deputy Minister of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, saying, "It can be printed in small quantities and distributed to a relatively large number of people inside and outside the party. There is no need to publish it in the newspaper because there is no need for the masses to see it. However, general grammar education should be written in articles in the newspaper and grammar textbooks should be written for schools." The "branches" referred to here are the twelve branches, also known as the twelve Earthly Branches, which are a collective term for the Chinese zodiac signs.