

FORMAL LETTER or EMAIL

Formal letters may be written to an individual or to an organisation. The purpose may be, for example:

- to apply for part-time or vacation work (application letter)
- to apply for study or scholarship opportunity (application letter)
- to complain about something (complaint letter)
- to make suggestions about something
- to request information (enquiry letter)

How do you write formal letters or emails?

Structure

1. Greeting

- a) If you know the name of the person you are writing to: *Dear Mr Simpson / Dear Ms Simpson*
- b) If you do not know the name of the person you are writing to:
 - *Dear Sir* (if you know you are writing to a man)
 - *Dear Madam* (if you know you are writing to a woman)
 - *Dear Sir or Madam / Dear Sir/Madam* (if you do not know the sex of the person you are writing to)

2. Body

2.1. Opening

The first paragraph states the reason(s) for writing and, if needed, what you are responding to (an advert, a prospectus...). In addition, an opening paragraph is needed to make reference to previous correspondence.

2.1.1. Paragraph 1: say why you are writing

- I am interested in applying for the job...
- I am writing with reference to your advertisement for...
- I am writing in response to your advertisement...
- I would like to apply for one of the scholarships / the degree I saw advertised in your prospectus.

2.2. Main content

Give the details about why you are writing. Organise all the essential information in a clear and logical way. Use linking structures to make your letter flow.

2.2.1. Paragraph 2: introduce yourself and describe relevant skills/experience (age, where you live, education-training and/or work experience relevant to the job, languages...)

- I speak English fluently.
- I have been studying English for / since...
- I have some / a lot of experience...

2.2.2. Paragraph 3: say why you would be good at the job and why you want it

- I believe I would be good at... / make a good... because I am...
- I think I would be suitable / be a good choice (to be a / an...) because...
- ...would provide me with valuable experience.

3. Closing

The end of your letter is as important as the beginning. You usually state what you would like the addressee to do, make a reference to a future event, offer to help...

- I look forward to hearing from you soon / I look forward to receiving your reply
- I look forward to receiving a full refund (*in a complaint letter*)
- I would like to know what you are going to do about this situation (*in a complaint letter*)
- I would like to thank you in advance for this information (*in a enquiry letter -requesting information*)
- If you require/Should you need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me/feel free to contact me.

4. Closing and final salutation

- Finish your letter with an appropriate comment. Don't just stop abruptly. Depending on how you started your letter (See "[1]Greeting" above), you will end your letter with:
 - a) Yours sincerely,
 - b) Yours faithfully,
- Sign your name on another new line.