

# Business English

**Business** (*noun*):

1. Commercial activity; a commercial organization.
2. Somebody's regular occupation; work to be done or things to be attended to.
3. Somebody's concern.

Other words:

Businessman / businesswoman or businessperson (*noun*)

Businesslike (*adjective*)

Busy (*adjective*)

**Business English** is English language especially related to international trade.

**Business English** is a part of English for Specific Purposes and can be considered a specialism within English language learning and teaching.

**Business English** focuses on vocabulary and topics used in the worlds of business, trade, finance, and international relations.

## Business English:

- refers to the communication skills used in the workplace, and
- focuses on the language & skills needed for typical business communication such as:
  - Presentations,
  - Negotiations,
  - Meetings,
  - Small talk,
  - Socializing,
  - Correspondence,
  - Report writing, ...

In both of these cases:

- it can be taught to **native** speakers of English.
  - For example, students preparing to enter the job market.
- It can also be a form of **international** English.

# **It is important to learn Business English**

- Nowadays we live in a wide society, where communication with almost every part of the world is possible.
- English is the language of international business mostly used by people working with:
  - colleagues,
  - clients and partners from other countries to understand each other,so that they can form effective and productive working relationships.
- In order to meet the demands of modern employers, everyone from university graduates to senior managers must be able use English for business.
- Effective internal and external communication is essential to the success of any business, but professionals who need to communicate with each other as non-native English speakers can greatly benefit from learning Business English.

# Difference between Business English and General English

- Business English and General English **both** require the development skills in:
  - fluency,
  - reading,
  - writing,
  - listening,
  - the application of linguistic principles
  - and, of course, plenty of hard work.
- It is important to have a good basis of General English to be able to communicate effectively.
- However, Business English courses focus on:
  - **specific vocabulary**,
  - **topics** and
  - **skills**

that are applicable to the workplace and enable you to communicate accurately.

➤ Examples:

Phone/conference calls

Presentations

Meetings

Negotiations

Emails

Reports

Business letters

➤ You will also be able to study a **variety of topics** that are relevant to your industry or company, which could include:

- law,
- finance,
- medicine,
- IT,
- Marketing or
- Human Resources,

while simultaneously enhancing your General English skills.

# The use of Business English

- By studying Business English you can improve your overall English language ability while targeting areas that will help you achieve your professional goals.
- These could be anything from:
  - starting on your career path,
  - looking for a promotion,
  - pushing for a pay rise or simply
  - feeling more confident in your role.
- Whatever your reasons may be, learning Business English can contribute to:
  - your professional progress, not to mention
  - being rewarding and enjoyable.

# Business Letters in English

**How to write business letters and other correspondence including memos & emails in English?**

*Following are tips from English Club, the world's premier free website for learners and teachers of English.*

## Business letters

- Business letters are formal paper communications between, to or from businesses and usually sent through the Post Office or sometimes by courier.
- Business letters are sometimes called "snail-mail" (in contrast to email which is faster).
- This lesson concentrates on business letters but also looks at other business correspondence.
- It includes:
  - Letter
  - Memo
  - Fax
  - Email

# Who writes Business Letters?

- Most people who have an occupation have to write business letters.
- Some write many letters each day and others only write a few letters over the course of a career.
- Business people also read letters on a daily basis.
- Letters are written from a person/group, known as the **sender** to a person/group, known in business as the **recipient**.
- Here are some examples of senders and recipients:
  - Business «-----» business
  - Business «-----» consumer
  - Job applicant «-----» company
  - Citizen «-----» government official
  - Employer «-----» employee
  - Staff member «-----» staff member



# Why write Business Letters?

There are many reasons why you may need to write business letters or other correspondence:

To persuade

To inform

To request

To express thanks

To remind

To recommend

To apologize

To congratulate

To reject a proposal or offer

To introduce a person or policy

To invite or welcome

To follow up

To formalize decisions

- Read through the following pages to learn more about:
  - the different types of business letters, and
  - how to write them.
  
- You will learn about:
  - formatting,
  - planning, and
  - writing letters, as well as
  - how to spot your own errors.
  
- These pages are designed to:
  - help you **write** business letters and correspondence,
  - but they will also help you learn to **read**,
  - and therefore **respond to**, the letters you receive.
  
- You will also find samples that you can:
  - use and
  - alterfor your own needs.

# Business Letter Vocabulary

**Attachment:** extra document or image that is added to an email

**Block format:** most common business letter format, single spaced, all paragraphs begin at the left margin

**Body:** the content of the letter; between the salutation and signature

**Bullets:** small dark dots used to set off items in an unnumbered list

**Certified mail:** important letters that sender pays extra postage for in order to receive a notice of receipt

**Coherent:** logical; easy to understand

**Concise:** gets to the point quickly

**Confidential, personal:** private

**Diplomacy, diplomatic:** demonstrating consideration and kindness

**Direct mail, junk mail:** marketing letters addressed to a large audience

**Double space:** format where one blank line is left between lines of text

**Enclosure:** extra document or image included with a letter

**Formal:** uses set formatting and business language, opposite of casual

**Format:** the set up or organization of a document

**Heading:** a word or phrase that indicates what the text below will be about

**Indent:** extra spaces (usually 5) at the beginning of a paragraph

**Informal:** casual

**Inside address:** recipient's mailing information

**Justified margins:** straight and even text, always begins at the same place

**Letterhead:** specialized paper with a (company) logo or name printed at the top

**Logo:** symbol or image that identifies a specific organization

**Margin:** a blank space that borders the edge of the text

**Memorandum (memo):** document sent within a company (internal), presented in short form

**Modified block format:** left justified as block format, but date and closing are typed on the right hand side

**On arrival notation:** notice to recipient that appears on an envelope (e.g. "confidential")

**Postage:** the cost of sending a letter through the Post Office

**Proofread:** read through a finished document to check for mistakes

**Punctuation:** marks used within or after sentences and phrases (e.g. periods, commas)

**Reader-friendly:** easy to read

**Recipient:** the person who receives the letter

**Right ragged:** format in which text on the right side of the document ends at slightly different points (not justified)

**Salutation:** greeting in a letter (e.g. "Dear Mr. Jones")

**Sensitive information:** content in a letter that may cause the receiver to feel upset

**Semi-block format:** paragraphs are indented, not left-justified

**Sincerely:** term used before a name when formally closing a letter

**Single spaced format:** where no blank lines are left in-between lines of text

**Spacing:** blank area between words or lines of text

**Tone:** the feeling of the language (e.g. serious, enthusiastic)

**Transitions:** words or phrases used to make a letter flow naturally (e.g. "furthermore", "on the other hand")

# Business Letter Formats

- There are certain standards for formatting a business letter, though some variations are acceptable (for example between **European** and **North American** business letters).
- Here are some basic guidelines:
  - Use **A4** (European) or **8.5 x 11 inch** (North American) paper or letterhead
  - Use **2.5 cm** or **1 inch** margins on all four sides
  - Use a simple font such as **Times New Roman** or **Arial**
  - Use **10** to **12 point** font
  - Use a **comma** after the salutation (Dear Mr. Bond,)
  - Lay out the letter so that it fits the paper appropriately
  - Single space** within paragraphs
  - Double space** between paragraphs
  - Double space** between last sentence and closing (Sincerely, Best wishes)
  - Leave **three** to **five** spaces for a handwritten signature
  - cc:** (meaning "copies to") comes after the typed name (if necessary)
  - enc:** (meaning "enclosure") comes next (if necessary)
  - Fold in **three** (horizontally) before placing in the envelope
  - Use **right ragged** formatting (not justified on right side)

# Formatting Business Letters

- **Block format** is the most common format used in business today.
  - With this format, nothing is centered.
  - All begin at the **left** margin:
    - the sender's address,
    - the recipient's address,
    - the date and
    - all new paragraphs
- (See image)
- There are other, slightly different ways of formatting a business letter, where for example:
    - paragraphs are indented or
    - the date is typed on the right hand side.
  - You can see examples of these in the image below:
    - Block format
    - Modified block format
    - Semi-block format



**Block format**



**Modified block format**



**Semi-block format**



Informatika Gasy Ltd  
300 Avenue de l'Indépendance  
Antananarivo 101  
Madagascar

5th December, 20##

Mr. John Smith  
Cyber Space Co.  
1000 Beaver St, #100  
New York, NY 10004  
USA

Your ref: 123  
Our ref: abc

Dear Mr. Smith,  
  
Forthcoming Exhibition

First paragraph...  
  
Second paragraph...  
  
Third paragraph...

Sincerely,  
  
*Aina Rasendra*  
  
Aina Rasendra, President  
  
cc: Brad Williams  
  
Enc: catalogue

**Sender's address**  
**May be printed company logo and address**

**Date**

**Recipient's address**

**Recipient's reference (if any)**  
**Sender's reference (if any)**

**Salutation**

**Subject**

|  
|  
| **Body of letter**  
|

**Closing**

**Signature (hand-written)**

**Name, Title (typed)**

**Copy to**

**Enclosure**

# Formatting Envelopes for Business Letters

- It is best to type an envelope for a business letter.
- Most word document programs contain an envelope labelling function to help you.
- All you need to do is:
  - indicate the size of envelope you are using and
  - type the correct information in the appropriate fields.

For example:

Sending company's name and address is sometimes printed here	Postage stamp
Ms. John Smith Cyber Space Co. 1000 Beaver St, #100 New York, NY 10004 USA	
½ inch clear zone to allow for Postal Service barcode	

# Formatting Business Memos

- Memos are short internal business letters, sent to other staff within the same company.
- A memo (or memorandum) may also be posted somewhere inside a company for all to see.
- Memos are becoming less common as electronic mail becomes more common.

# How to Write an Effective Memo

- Memo (short for memorandum) is a business-oriented style that is best suited for inter-office or inter-colleague correspondence [kean].
- More informal in tone and organization than a letter, memos are generally used:
  - to provide or ask for information,
  - to announce a new policy,
  - to update on personnel transfers, or
  - for any other internal issues.

## Elements of an Effective Memo

- An effective memo:
  - grabs the reader's attention
  - provides information, makes a recommendation, or asks for action
  - supports your position or explains benefits to reader
  - mentions next steps and deadlines

When composing a memo, always take the 4-step approach to writing:

- plan what you want to say,
- write a draft,
- revise the draft, and
- edit.

## Types of Memos

There are 4 types of memos you might have to write, each with its own organizational format:

- information,
- problem-solving,
- persuasion, and
- internal memo proposal.

More informal in appearance and tone than a letter, a memo is set up in a special format.

### ➤ Information Memo

- used to deliver or request information or assistance
- first paragraph provides main idea
- second paragraph expands on the details
- third paragraph outlines the action required

### ➤ Problem-solving Memo

- suggests a specific action to improve a situation
- first paragraph states the problem
- second paragraph analyzes the problem
- third paragraph makes a recommendation
- when making a recommendation, include:
  - **not only** the positive details
  - **but also** the drawbacks and diffuse them yourself

## ➤ Persuasion Memo

- used to encourage the reader to undertake an action he or she doesn't have to take
- first paragraph begins with an agreeable point
- second paragraph introduces the idea
- third paragraph states benefits to the reader
- fourth paragraph outlines the action required
- fifth paragraph ends with a call to action

## ➤ Internal Memo Proposal

- used to convey suggestions to senior management
- first paragraph states reason for writing
- second paragraph outlines present situation and states writer's proposal
- third paragraph describes advantage(s)
- fourth paragraph mentions and diffuses disadvantage(s)
- fifth paragraph ends with a call to action

# Memo Parts

- More informal in appearance and tone than a letter, a memo is set up in a special format.
- To make the information more readable:
  - headings,
  - lists,
  - tables or
  - graphsare often used
- All memos consist of 2 sections:
  - the heading and
  - the body.
- The heading indicates:
  - who is writing
  - to whom,
  - when,
  - and why.



The **heading** should include the following **5** parts:

## **1. To**

- lists the names of everyone who will receive the memo
- includes the first and last name and titles or departments of the recipients for:
  - formal memos,
  - memos to superiors, or
  - if everyone on the list does not know each other
- if all recipients know each other's names and positions, use just the first initial and last name of each recipient
- can be listed alphabetically or by rank
- if it is not possible to fit all the names in the **To:** area, use the phrase "*See distribution list*"
- at the end of the memo add the word "Distribution" and then list the names of the people who will receive a copy of the memo
- arrange the names by rank, department or alphabetically

## **2. From**

- lists the name of the writer(s) in the same way as the name(s) of the recipient(s)
- there is no complimentary close or signature line, but authors initial their names on the **From:** line

## **3. Date**

- lists the month, date, and year the memo was written
- do **not** use abbreviations
- avoid using numbers for months and days

## **4. Re: or Subject**

- indicates the main subject of the letter
- should be as specific and concise as possible

## **5. Cc or c**

- lists those readers who should have a copy of the memo for their information or reference but are not expected to carry out the same action as the recipients listed in the **To:** line
- "cc" can also be placed at the end of the memo below the distribution list (if used)

➤ The **body** of the memo conveys the message and generally consists of **4** parts:

### **1. Introduction**

- states the general problem or main idea

### **2. Statement of facts**

- states the facts or discusses the problem or issue

### **3. Argument**

- explains importance or relevance of facts

### **4. Conclusion**

- summarizes the main idea, suggests or requests action
- memos do not have a complimentary close or signature line
- memos end with a call to action

Following are **8** more tips from WikiHow to write a Business Memos

1. Write the **heading** section of the memo.

The heading contains information about:

- the recipient of the memo,
- the sender,
- the date and
- the business memo subject.

The subject of the memo should be a short sentence that describes the entire memo.

2. **Compose the opening** paragraph.

The **first paragraph** of a business memo should clearly state the:

- the intention of the memo and
- an overview of what information is going to be presented in the body of the memo.

3. Briefly **describe the issue**.

The catalyst behind the release of a business memo needs to be summed up succinctly.

Sentences used to define the issue should be:

- short,
- to the point and
- rely heavily on facts.

#### 4. **Explain the solutions** in progress.

If you:

- are working on a solution to a problem, or
- have an idea of how it can be solved,

the **third paragraph** is the place to describe it.

If the point of the memo is to deliver bad news, use this paragraph to highlight any positives that may result.

#### 5. **Summarize your findings** in the **fourth paragraph**.

If the memo is short, this is an optional section.

But if the memo takes up more than one full page, a summary section highlighting the main points discussed is helpful.

This will ensure that the main points do not get lost within the bulk of the memo.

Consider using a bullet list to make this section stand out.

#### 6. Finish the memo by including:

- what the **recipients need to do** and
- a **deadline date** for completing the requested action.

Include any information about follow-up communication in the **last paragraph**.

## 7. **Sign** the memo.

This is an optional step, but some companies adhere to the practice of completing business correspondence with the sender's signature appearing above the sender's typed name.

## 8. **Proofread** the memo.

Prior to sending the memo:

- internally or
- externally,

make sure that the content is grammatically correct.

If the memo contains sensitive information, check your company policy to see who can edit or read the memo for you.

➤ In contrast to letters, memos do **not** usually contain:

- salutations or closings, and
- may be **typed** or **hand-written**.

➤ The text portion of the memo is generally in block format.

➤ Memos should include: "**From**", "**To**", "**Date**", "**Subject**" and the **message** itself, like this:

[Company logo]

## MEMORANDUM

**From:** [name or initials]

**To:** [name or initials]

**Date:**

**Subject:** [short description]

**Message starts here...**

Often  
With  
Bullet  
Points

# Formatting Business Email

When using email in business, most of the guidelines for standard formatting in business letters apply.

Here are a few differences:

- Choose a **subject** line that is simple and straightforward.  
Refrain from using key words that might cause an email to go into another person's trash box.
- **Repeat the subject** line in the body of the email, beneath the salutation (as with a letter).
- Use the "cc" address line to copy more than one person with your correspondence.
- You can request a **receipt** for important letters.  
The system will automatically let you know when someone has opened your email.
- Instead of a signature, include :
  - your **typed name**, and below it include
  - your **email address**,
  - your **business name**

and address, phone and fax number, and website **if** appropriate.



➤ Remember that people often print out emails, so:

- your own email address and
- the subject line

would be lost if you had not included them in the body of the email.

➤ Internal electronic mail may be formatted more like a memo than a formal letter.

*Following are tips from WikiHow to Write Business Emails*

➤ Business emails are an entirely different 'kettle of fish' than the emails you send to your friends.

➤ You usually:

- have a defined purpose in mind when you communicate with business associates,
- could have any number of things to talk about with a friend or family member.

To properly use email in your business or job, use the following **6** steps.

**1.** Keep in mind that email is less formal than a written letter would be and treat it accordingly.

**2.** Decide how to phrase the greeting.

If you don't know the person, a simple 'Hello' will do.

If you know the person, talk to them as if you were in a conversation together.

**3.** Do not use abbreviated verb forms.

*Say:* He is,

We are,

He would,

*Do **not** say:*

He's

We're

He'd.

**4.** Give the person another way of contacting you.

A work or cell phone number will usually work.

**5.** Practice good email etiquette when responding to anyone.

Quote the part you are responding to and delete the rest.

**6.** Don't feel that just because it is easy, you should shoot off a reply without giving any thought to it.

For your emails to stand out from the tons of email that people receive, do something that will distinguish it.

# Things that you can concentrate on to improve the look & readability of your email:

## Style

- The human eye reacts differently to a computer screen than a piece of paper, so how you format your email is vital.
- Use **short, succinct** sentences that get to the point immediately; remember, your goal is to communicate important information, so give that to the reader right up front.
- Always include a **greeting** and a **signature**, and use as many line and paragraph breaks as possible; this makes the email easier to read.
- And resist the urge to write a book: short business emails are better; the equivalent of a page or so is sufficient.

## Tone

- Just because you **can** be horribly familiar and informal ... **don't be**.
- Know who you are emailing and keep an appropriate tone.

## Grammar

- Check and double-check your email.
- Watch closely for grammatical errors.
- Even if you put a lot of thought and effort into your communications, poor grammar gives it the appearance of something thrown together.
- If it is a real problem, find ways to ensure that you aren't sending poor quality emails.
- Watch your spelling and punctuation.
- Read and read again to make sure that repetition is removed.
- No one wants to hear the same old thing over and over.
- Anyone receiving your emails will appreciate the obvious care that you take with them because they probably receive a lot of poorly written ones.

## Response

- Be sure that what you are asking for or expecting is understood.
- If you are sending information as an FYI...let the reader know.
- If you expect a response or results, be clear about those as well.
- However, always remember your manners when requesting a response.
- You get more results with honey than vinegar.

## Tips

- Check into some grammar correcting software.