LETTERS

Letters are brief messages sent to recipients that are often outside the organization (Bovee & Thill, 2010).They are often printed on letterhead paper, and represent the business or organization in one or two pages. Shorter messages may include e-mails or memos, either hard copy or electronic, while reports tend to be three or more pages in length.

While e-mail and text messages may be used more frequently today, the effective business letter remains a common form of written communication. It can serve to introduce you to a potential employer, announce a product or service, or even serve to communicate feelings and emotions. We'll examine the basic outline of a letter and then focus on specific products or writing assignments.

All writing assignments have expectations in terms of language and format. The audience or reader may have their own idea of what constitutes a specific type of letter, and your organization may have its own format and requirements. This chapter outlines common elements across letters, and attention should be directed to the expectations associated with your particular writing assignment. There are many types of letters, and many adaptations in terms of form and content, but in this chapter, we discuss the fifteen elements of a traditional block-style letter.

Letters may serve to introduce your skills and qualifications to prospective employers, deliver important or specific information, or serve as documentation of an event or decision. Regardless of the type of letter you need to write, it can contain up to fifteen elements in five areas.Letters are brief, print messages often used externally to inform or persuade customers, vendors, or the public .A letter has fifteen parts, each fulfilling a specific function.

Content	Guidelines
1. Return Address	This is your address where someone could send a reply. If your letter includes a letterhead with this information, either in the header (across the top of the page) or the footer (along the bottom of the page), you do not need to include it before the date.
2. Date	The date should be placed at the top, right or left justified, five lines from the top of the page

Content	Guidelines
	or letterhead logo.
3. Reference (Re:)	Like a subject line in an e-mail, this is where you indicate what the letter is in reference to, the subject or purpose of the document.
4. Delivery (Optional)	Sometimes you want to indicate on the letter itself how it was delivered. This can make it clear to a third party that the letter was delivered via a specific method, such as certified mail (a legal requirement for some types of documents).
5. Recipient Note (Optional)	This is where you can indicate if the letter is personal or confidential.
6. Salutation	A common salutation may be "Dear Mr. (full name)." But if you are unsure about titles (i.e., Mrs., Ms., Dr.), you may simply write the recipient's name (e.g., "Dear Cameron Rai") followed by a colon. A comma after the salutation is correct for personal letters, but a colon should be used in business. The salutation "To whom it may concern" is appropriate for letters of recommendation or other letters that are intended to be read by any and all individuals. If this is not the case with your letter, but you are unsure of how to address your recipient, make every effort to find out to whom the letter should be specifically addressed. For many, there is no sweeter sound than that of their name, and to spell it incorrectly runs the risk of alienating the reader before your letter has even been read. Avoid the use of impersonal salutations like "Dear Prospective Customer," as the lack of personalization can alienate a future client.
7. Introduction	This is your opening paragraph, and may include an attention statement, a reference to the purpose of the document, or an introduction of the person or topic depending on the type of

Content	Guidelines
	letter. An emphatic opening involves using the most significant or important element of the letter in the introduction. Readers tend to pay attention to openings, and it makes sense to outline the expectations for the reader up front. Just as you would preview your topic in a speech, the clear opening in your introductions establishes context and facilitates comprehension.
8. Body	If you have a list of points, a series of facts, or a number of questions, they belong in the body of your letter. You may choose organizational devices to draw attention, such as a bullet list, or simply number them. Readers may skip over information in the body of your letter, so make sure you emphasize the key points clearly. This is your core content, where you can outline and support several key points. Brevity is important, but so is clear support for main point(s). Specific, meaningful information needs to be clear, concise, and accurate.
9. Conclusion	An emphatic closing mirrors your introduction with the added element of tying the main points together, clearly demonstrating their relationship. The conclusion can serve to remind the reader, but should not introduce new information. A clear summary sentence will strengthen your writing and enhance your effectiveness. If your letter requests or implies action, the conclusion needs to make clear what you expect to happen. It is usually courteous to conclude by thanking the recipient for his or her attention, and to invite them to contact you if you can be of help or if they have questions. This paragraph reiterates the main points and their relationship to each other, reinforcing the main point or purpose.
10. Close	"Sincerely" or "Cordially" are standard business

Content	Guidelines
	closing statements. ("Love," "Yours Truly," and "BFF" are closing statements suitable for personal correspondence, but not for business.) Closing statements are normally placed one or two lines under the conclusion and include a hanging comma, as in Sincerely,
11. Signature	Five lines after the close, you should type your name (required) and, on the line below it, your title (optional).
12. Preparation Line	If the letter was prepared, or word-processed, by someone other than the signatory (you), then inclusion of initials is common, as in MJD or abc.
13. Enclosures/Attachments	Just like an e-mail with an attachment, the letter sometimes has additional documents that are delivered with it. This line indicates what the reader can look for in terms of documents included with the letter, such as brochures, reports, or related business documents.
14. Courtesy Copies or "CC"	The abbreviation "CC" once stood for carbon copies but now refers to courtesy copies. Just like a "CC" option in an e-mail, it indicates the relevant parties that will also receive a copy of the document.
15. Logo/Contact Information	A formal business letter normally includes a logo or contact information for the organization in the header (top of page) or footer (bottom of page).

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE LETTERS

Remember that a letter has five main areas:

1. The heading, which establishes the sender, often including address and date
2. The introduction, which establishes the purpose
3. The body, which articulates the message

4. The conclusion, which restates the main point and may include a call to action
5. The signature line, which sometimes includes the contact information
   (1 inch margins on all sides of the letter)

1. **Return Address:** (if not in letterhead logo)
2. **Date:** 01/01/201X
3. **Reference—Re:** How to write a letter
4. **Delivery (optional):** USPS Certified Mail #123456789
5. **Recipient Note (optional):** Confidential
6. **Salutation:** Dear Student X:
7. **Introduction:** This letter is to inform you that the myth of a paperless office, where you will not be required to produce hard copy letters on letterhead, is a myth.
8. **Body:** While email has largely replaced letter writing for many applications, there remain several reasons for producing a hard-copy letter. The first reason is that you are required to write it for this class, as many employers still produce letters as a normal part of business communication, including documentation. Next, we must consider that paper sales in business have increased across the last decade, showing no signs of the decrease we would associate with the transition to the paperless office. Finally, business letters serve many functions, and your proficiency in their efficient and effective production will contribute to your personal and professional success.
9. **Conclusion:** Letter writing is a skill that will continue to be required in the business environment of today and tomorrow.
10. **Close:** Sincerely,
11. **Signature Line:** Scott McLean
12. **Preparation Line:** GSM/ep
13. **Enclosures:** (optional, if needed)
14. **Courtesy Copies:** cc: Jenn Yee
15. **Logo/Contact Information:**
13 N. Mill Street
Nyack, NY 10960
Always remember that letters represent you and your company in your absence. In order to communicate effectively and project a positive image,

…………………………….

- be clear, concise, specific, and respectful;
- each word should contribute to your purpose;
- each paragraph should focus on one idea;
- the parts of the letter should form a complete message;
- the letter should be free of errors.

Report

A report is a nonfiction account that presents and/or summarizes the facts about a particular event, topic, or issue. The idea is that people who are unfamiliar with the subject can find everything they need to know from a good report. In technical terms, the definition of a report is pretty vague: any account, spoken or written, of the matters concerning a particular topic known as report.

Really, when people talk about "reports," they're usually referring to official documents outlining the facts of a topic, typically written by an expert on the subject or someone assigned to investigate it.

✓ Details of an event or situation

✓ The consequences or on-going effect of an event

✓ Evaluation of statistical data or analytics

✓ Interpretations from the information in the report

✓ Predictions or recommendations based on the information in the report

✓ How the information relates to other events or reports

Types of reports

There are a few different types of reports, depending on the purpose and to whom you present your report. Here's a quick list of the common types of reports:

- **Academic report:** Tests a student's comprehension of the subject matter, such as book reports, reports on historical events, and biographies.

- **Business reports:** Identifies information useful in business strategy, such as marketing reports, internal memos, SWOT analysis, and feasibility reports

- **Scientific reports:** Shares research findings, such as research papers and case studies, typically in science journals

Reports can be further divided into categories based on how they are written. For example, a report could be formal or informal, short or long, and internal or external. In business, a **vertical report** shares information with people on different levels of the hierarchy (i.e., people who work above you and below you), while a **lateral report** is for people on the author's same level, but in different departments.

Structure

The structure of a report depends on the type of report and the requirements of the assignment. While reports can use their own unique structure, most follow this basic template:

- **Executive summary:** Just like an abstract in an academic paper, an executive summary is a stand-alone section that summarizes the findings in your report so readers know what to expect. These are mostly for official reports and less so for school reports.

- **Introduction:** Setting up the body of the report, your introduction explains the overall topic that you're about to discuss, with your thesis statement and any need-to-know background information before you get into your own findings.

- **Body:** The body of the report explains all your major discoveries, broken up into headings and subheadings. The body makes up the majority of the entire report; whereas the introduction and conclusion are just a few paragraphs each, the body can go on for pages.

- **Conclusion:** The conclusion is where you bring together all the information in your report and come to a definitive interpretation or judgment. This is usually where the author inputs their own personal opinions or inferences.

Format

Title page: Official reports often use a title page to keep things organized; if a person has to read multiple reports, title pages make them easier to keep track of.

- **Table of contents:** Just like in books, the table of contents helps readers go directly to the section they're interested in, allowing for faster browsing.

- **Page numbering:** A common courtesy if you're writing a longer report, page numbering makes sure the pages are in order in the case of mix-ups or misprints.

- **Headings and subheadings:** Reports are typically broken up into sections, divided by headings and subheadings, to facilitate browsing and scanning.

- **Citations:** If you're citing information from another source, the citations guidelines tell you the recommended format.

- **Works cited page:** A bibliography at the end of the report lists credits and the legal information for the other sources you got information from.

As always, refer to the assignment for the specific guidelines on each of these. The people who read the report should tell you which style guides or formatting they require.

Seven steps of report writing

1.Choose a topic based on the assignment

Before you start writing, you need to pick the topic of your report. Often, the topic is assigned for you, as with most business reports, or predetermined by the nature of your work, as with scientific reports. If that's the case, you can ignore this step and move on.

2.Conduct research

With business and scientific reports, the research is usually your own or provided by the company—although there's still plenty of digging for external sources in both.

For academic papers, you're largely on your own for research, unless you're required to use class materials. That's one of the reasons why choosing the right topic is so crucial; you won't go far if the topic you picked doesn't have enough available research. The key is to search only for reputable sources: official documents, other reports, research papers, case studies, books from respected authors, etc. Feel free to use research cited in other similar reports. You can often find a lot of information online through search engines, but a quick trip to the library can also help in a pinch.

3.Thesis statement

Before you go any further, write a thesis statement to help you conceptualize the main theme of your report. Just like the topic sentence of a paragraph, the thesis statement summarizes the main point of your writing, in this case, the report.

Once you've collected enough research, you should notice some trends and patterns in the information. If these patterns all infer or lead up to a bigger, overarching point, that's your thesis statement.

For example, if you were writing a report on the wages of fast-food employees, your thesis might be something like, "Although wages used to be commensurate with living expenses, after years of stagnation they are no longer adequate." From there, the rest of your report will elaborate on that thesis, with ample evidence and supporting arguments.

It's good to include your thesis statement in both the executive summary and introduction of your report, but you still want to figure it out early so you know which direction to go when you work on your outline next.

4.Prepare an outline

Writing an outline is recommended for all kinds of writing, but it's especially useful for reports given their emphasis on organization. Because reports are often separated by headings and subheadings, a solid outline makes sure you stay on track while writing without missing anything.

5.Write a rough draft

Actually writing the rough draft, or first draft, is usually the most time-consuming step. Here's where you take all the information from your research and put it into words. To avoid getting overwhelmed, simply follow your outline step by step to make sure you don't accidentally leave out anything.

6.Revise and edit your report

Once your rough draft is finished, it's time to go back and start fixing the mistakes you ignored the first time around. (Before you dive right back in, though, it helps to sleep on it to start editing fresh, or at least take a small break to unwind from writing the rough draft.)

7.Proofread and check for mistakes

Last, it pays to go over your report one final time, just to optimize your wording and check for grammatical or spelling mistakes. In the previous step you checked for "big picture" mistakes, but here you're looking for specific, even nitpicky problems. A writing assistant like Grammarly flags those issues for you. Grammarly's free version points out any spelling and grammatical mistakes while you write, with suggestions to improve your writing that you can apply with just one click. The Premium version offers even more advanced

features, such as tone adjustments and word choice recommendations for taking your writing to the next level.

Email Writing

Email writing is an art and doing it well takes know-how and practice. But you don't have to make all the mistakes for yourself in order to write professional emails. We assembled for you the essential tips for creating highly effective formal emails with a deep dive into formal email formats, structure, and best practices.

Email body

The body of your email is where you get into your main message. Whether you're composing an email to establish a new business connecting or just following up on a meeting, the body of your email should be detailed enough that the reader isn't confused, but also brief and to-the-point. No one wants to sit and read a long-winded email when they have dozens of other unattended messages in their inbox.

- **Be concise** – detail only what's needed to get your point across.

- **Use words that convey (authentic) positive personal emotional** – words like "glad", "excited", "intrigued", "confident".

- **Use the word "because"** when asking for something – it's been scientifically shown that people are more easily convinced to do something if told why, and more so if the reason is important for them.

- **Show don't tell** – if you can't explain something in few words, see if you can add a screenshot, a video or a link that explain it better.

- **Use headings to split long content into sub-topics** – if you can't avoid writing a long email, make sure to break it up into subsections with

headings. This will help your time-scarce readers to scan and find their points of interest.

- **Add your concrete request or question in bold text** – to ensure your readers do not miss the most important piece of content (your request or question) – set it in a separate line and put it in bold. You can also use some color. If you do avoid light shades (you want high contrast between the text and the white background. Once you pick a color – stick with it.

Email ending

After you've addressed all your main points in the body of your email, you'll want to end it with a respectful and brief salutation. You can either invite your recipient to reach out for more questions, wish them success, or ask a question. It all depends on the motive for your email. If it was a long email it could also be a good idea to gently reiterate your main request, question, or motivation.