

How to Format & Write a Business Letter (with Examples)

 [wikihow.com/Write-a-Business-Letter](https://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Business-Letter)

Need to write a polished, professional letter? Whether you're following up on a job interview or sending in a sales pitch, knowing how to format a business letter is a great skill to have. Most business letters follow an established, easy-to-follow format you can adapt for any situation. In this comprehensive guide, we'll take you through the process of writing a business letter in full-block format, so you can easily put your professional thoughts on the page and excel in all your business endeavors.

Things You Should Know

- Include your company's name and address, the date, and the recipient's name and address at the top of the page before your salutation.
- Use a polite and professional tone to clearly explain what you're trying to say or what action you'd like the recipient to take. Use as few words as possible.
- Finish the letter with a professional closing like "Sincerely," followed by your signature, typed name, and address. Proofread before sending.

Sample Business Letter

Sample Business Letter About Shipment

Part 1

Company, Inc.
123 Market Street
Los Angeles, California 90002

10 October 2012

Mr. John Doe
Customer Service Representative
Widget Company, Inc.
456 Market Street
Miami, Florida 33111

Dear Mr. Doe:

I am writing you concerning a recent purchase of widgets. Approximately two weeks ago, on October 1, I ordered a total of 50 widgets for Company, Inc. via the Widget Sales client website. I received an email notification two days later confirming the receipt of payment and the shipment of the widgets. Everything else seemed perfectly normal. But the shipment never arrived. I have been unable to locate the widgets. Do you have any information as to what has happened to delay the shipment or where the widgets are currently?

I have worked with Widget Company, Inc. in the past and have the greatest confidence in your products and customer service. I'll need the shipment of widgets soon, however, and I hope you'll be able to provide me with a date of when I can expect them. Thank you so much for any help you might be able to offer.

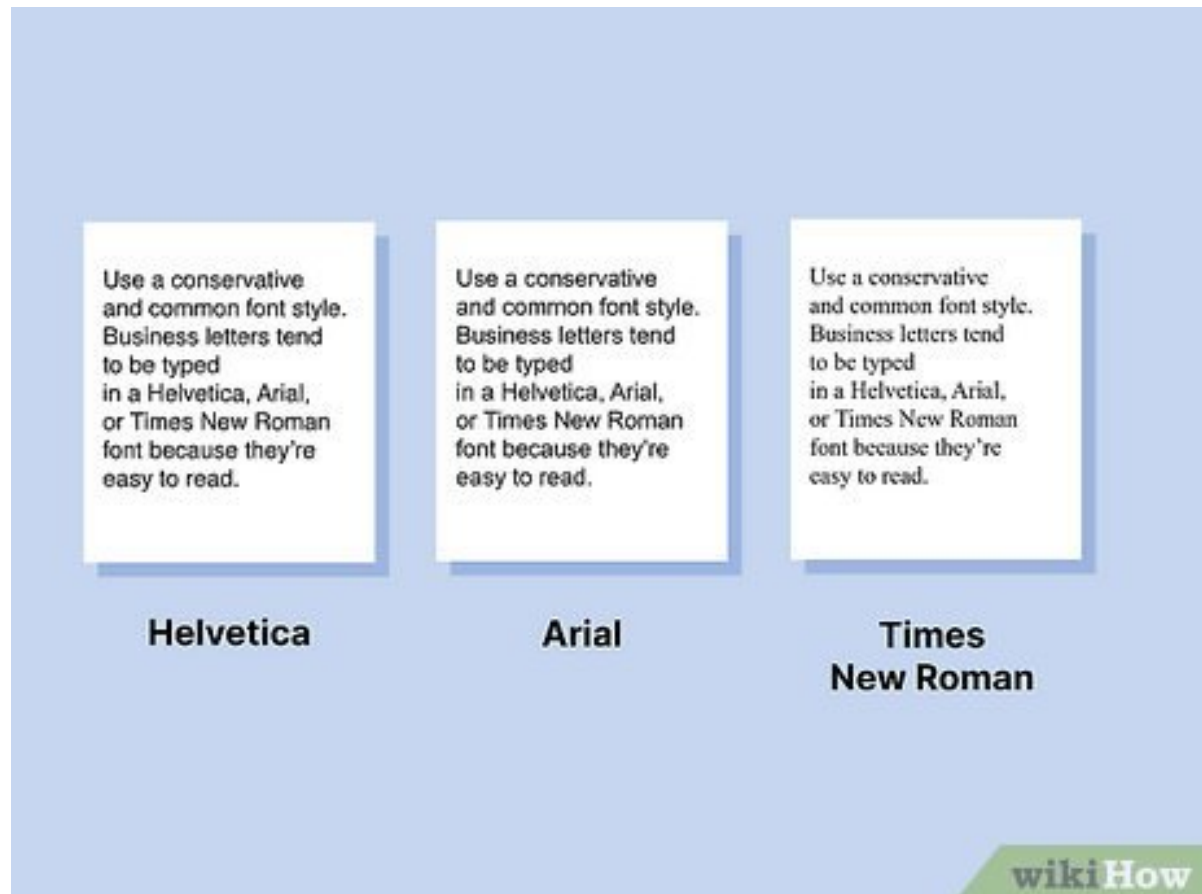
Sincerely,

John Brown
Vice President of Company, Inc.
555-555-5555
j.brown@company.com

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Starting the Letter

1.

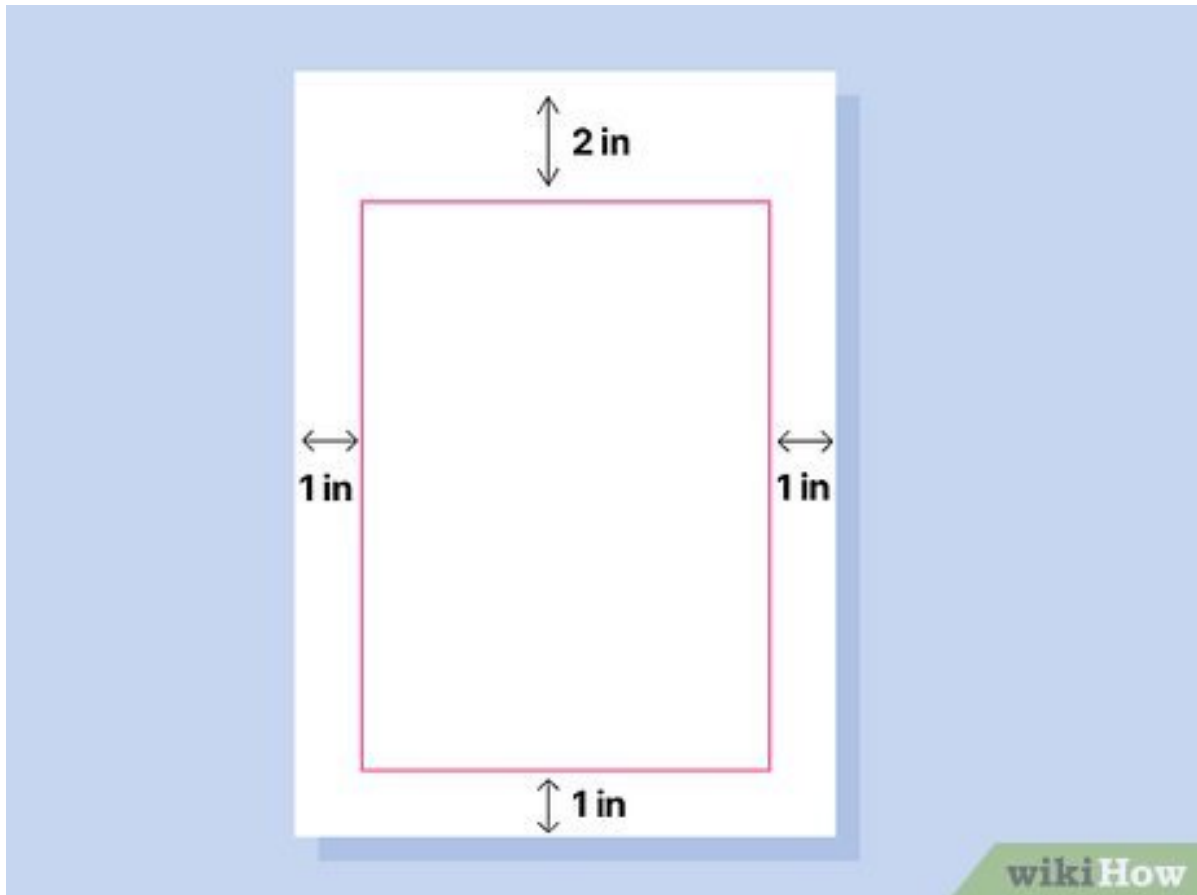


1

Use a conservative and common font style. Business letters tend to be typed in a Helvetica, Arial, or Times New Roman font because they're easy to read. Avoid script or cursive fonts to remain professional.^[1]

Keep your font black throughout your letter, even if you're composing a business email.

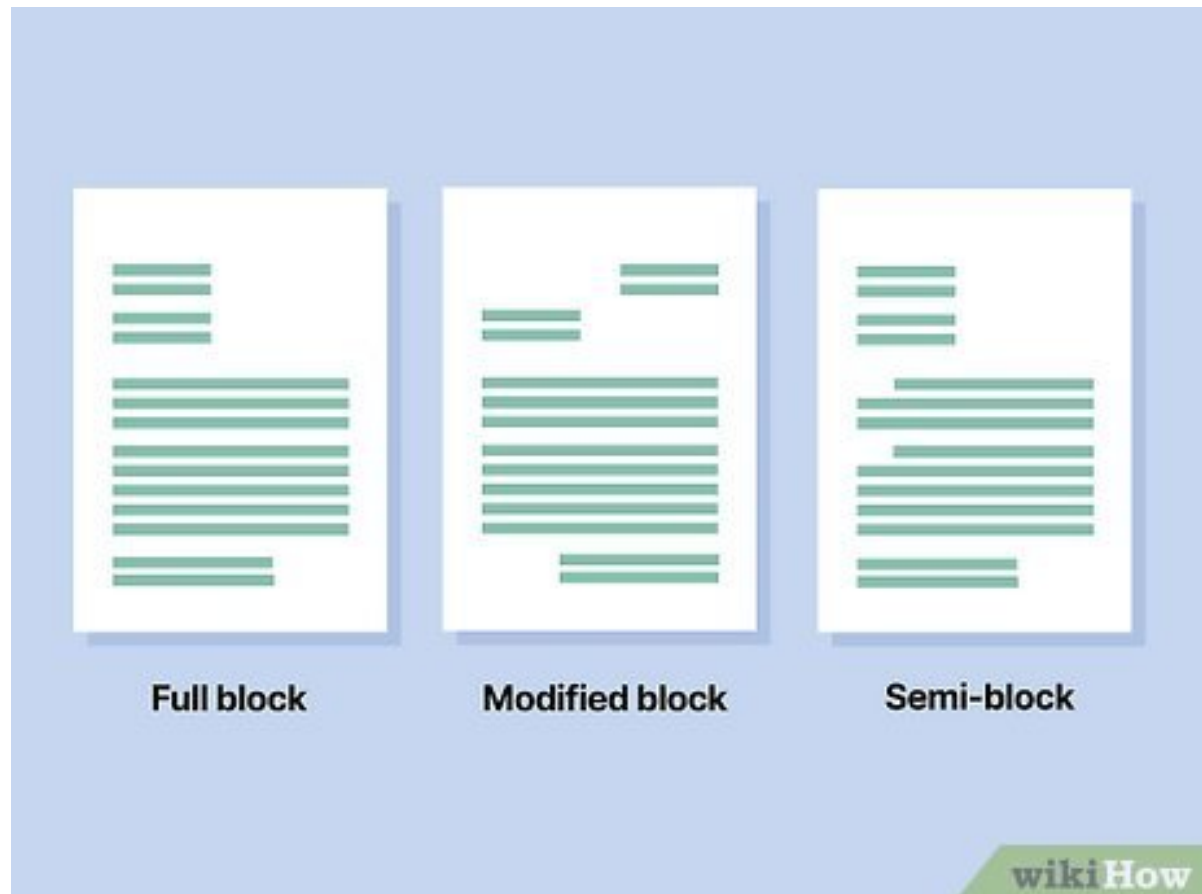
2.



2

Change the top margin to 2 inches. A typed business letter has a top margin of 2 inches, while the other 3 margins are the standard 1 inch. Change the margins in your word processor by selecting “Page Layout,” “Margins,” and then “Custom Margins.”^[2]

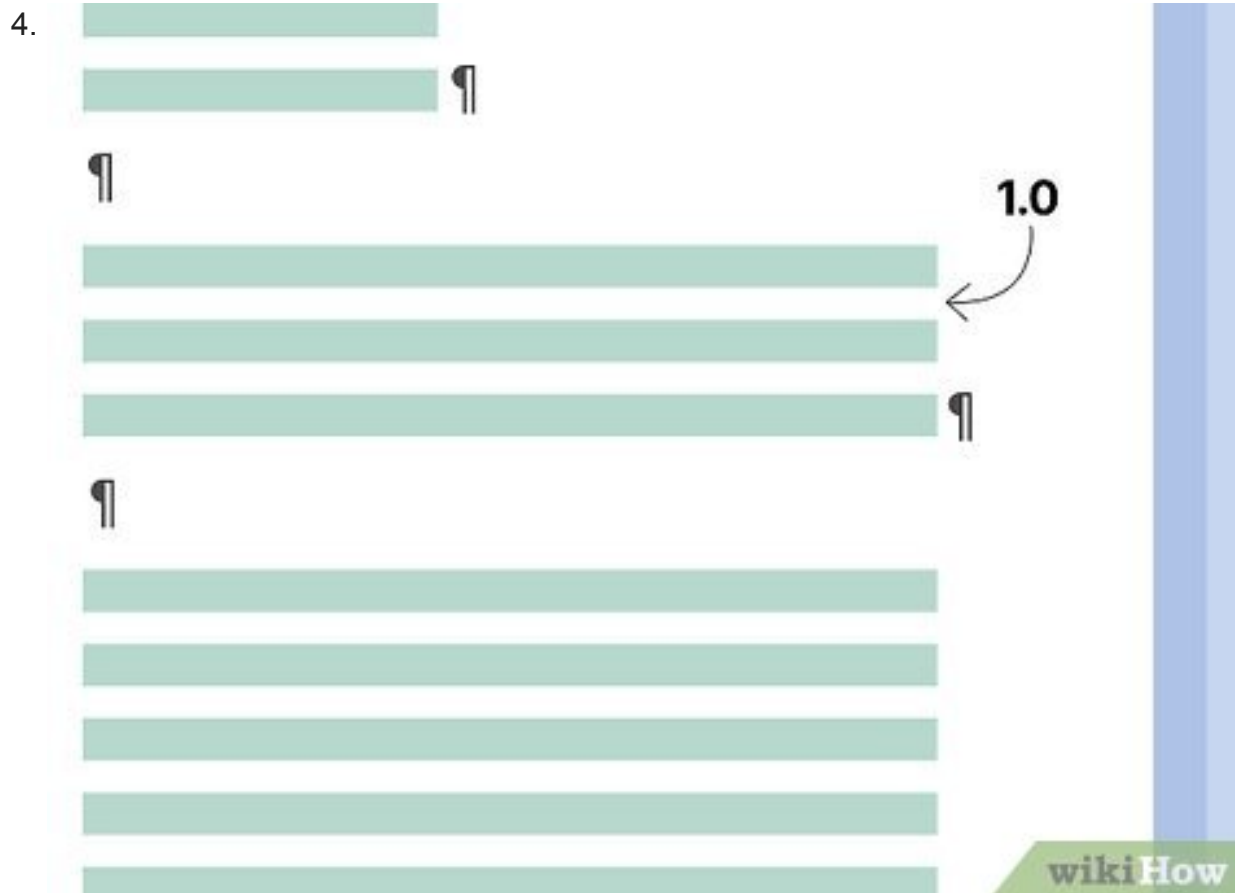
3.



3

Stick to a left-justified block format. There are 3 types of business letter formats: full block, modified block, and semi-block. Full block format is the most traditional and widely used amongst companies, making it perfectly modifiable for any context. With this format, there are no indentations, and everything in your letter is aligned to the left.^[3]

- In modified block formats, the heading, close, and signature are right aligned.
- In semi-block formats, each paragraph is indented.



4

Keep your document single-spaced. Your business letter should always be left aligned and single-spaced (unless you're told by your company otherwise). This small traditional spacing gives you plenty of space to write out your message, so you don't venture onto a second page.^[4]

Hit "Enter" twice between the first, second, and third body paragraphs, as well as the complimentary close and signature.

5.

Your name
Company name
Address

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5

6.



6

Put the date 2 lines underneath the address. Writing out the full date is the most professional choice and lets the recipient know when you mailed the letter. Keep a left indent for this line as well.^[6]

- For example, rather than writing "10/15/12," write the full date as "October 15, 2012" or "15 October 2012."
- Putting the date before the month is standard in European countries.
- If you are writing your letter over several days, date it with the day when it was finished.

7.

Your name
Company name
Address

Date

Recipient's name
Title (if applicable)
Company name
Address

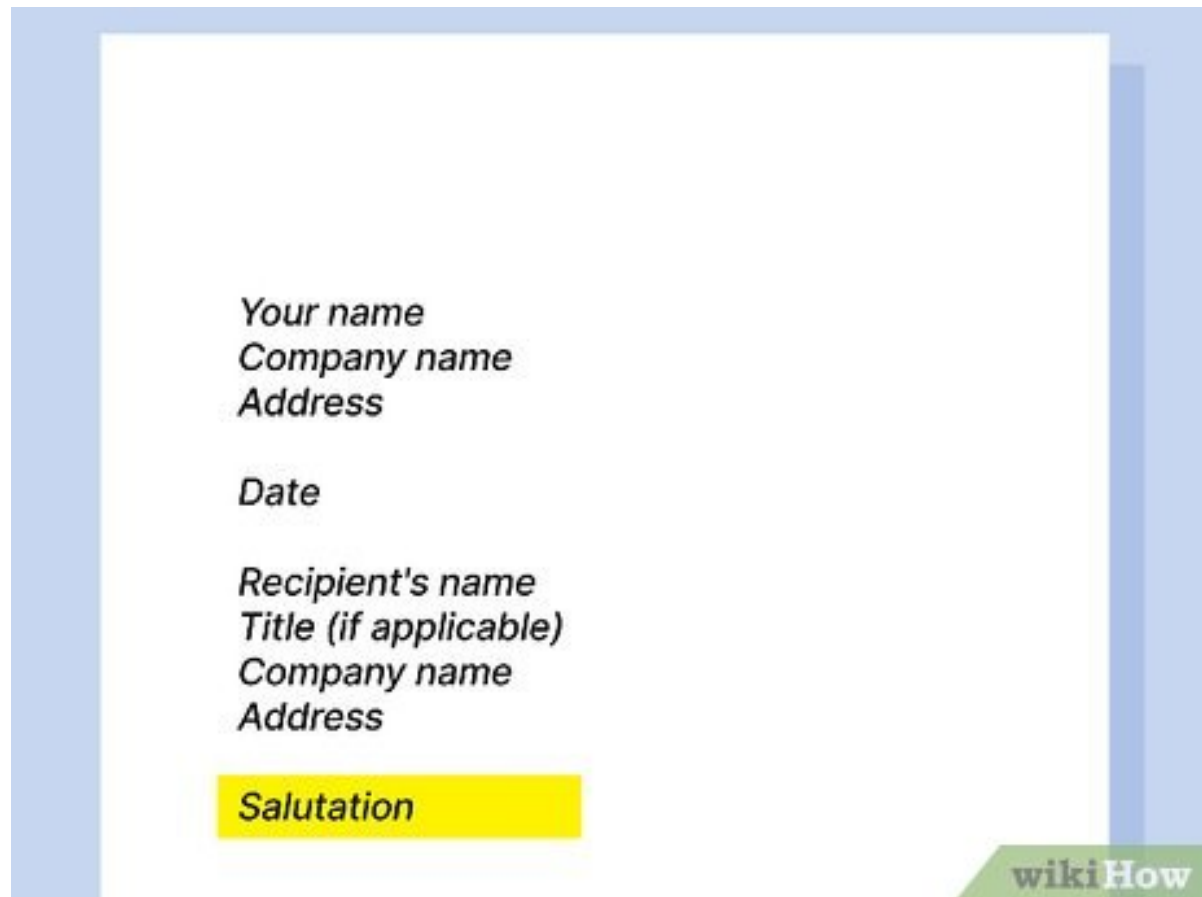
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7

Add the recipient's information. Write out the recipient's full name, title (if applicable), company name, and address in that order, with each piece of information on a separate line. If necessary, include a reference number. The recipient's information should be left-aligned a few lines below the date.

- Address the letter to a specific individual rather than a full company, so it gets to the right person.
- If you don't know the name of the person you're sending the letter to, contact the company to see who you should reach out to for your specific demands.

8.



8

Choose a salutation. The salutation is an important indicator of respect and indicates professional familiarity. It officially starts your letter and formally greets the recipient. Keep your salutation left-aligned with a line space between it and the recipient's address.^[7] Here are some formal salutations you can choose from:

- If you don't know the recipient well, "Dear Sir/Madam" is a safe choice.
- The recipient's title and last name can also be used: "Dear Dr. Smith."
- If you know the recipient well and have an informal relationship with them, you may consider a first-name address, like "Dear Susan."
- If you're unsure of the recipient's gender, type their full name: "Dear Kris Smith."
- Use "To Whom It May Concern" *only* if you don't know whom, specifically, you're addressing.
- Don't forget a comma after a salutation or a colon after "To Whom It May Concern."

Part 2

Writing the Body of the Letter

1.

Date

Recipient's name

Title (if applicable)

Company name

Address

Salutation

The first paragraph

The second paragraph

The third paragraph

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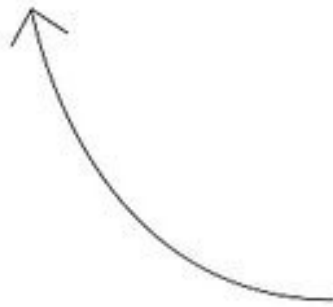
1

Include at least 3 body paragraphs. Typically, a business letter has a beginning, middle, and end. This is called the body of your letter and is where you state your purpose or reason for writing. Think of it like writing any other paper or letter, except you should remain professional and follow these standard guidelines:^[8]

- **The first paragraph** is your introduction and states the main purpose or subject of the letter. Avoid going into too much detail, and stick to vague points of interest that'll keep the recipient reading.
- **The second paragraph** details specific information about your purpose or subject. Put statistics, data, or first-hand accounts in this paragraph. Your second paragraph could consist of more than one small paragraph, as long as it stays on a single page.
- **The third paragraph** is your conclusion and restates your purpose or subject. Explain your "main idea" or reason for writing again while giving the recipient an incentive to get back to you.

2.

I am writing to you regarding...



*dive straight
into the matter*

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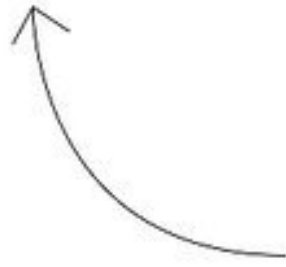
2

Strike the right tone. Time is money, as the saying goes, so the tone of your letter should be brief and professional. Make your letter a quick read by diving straight into the matter and keeping your comments brief in the first paragraph. For instance, you can always start with "I am writing to you regarding..." and go from there.^[9]

- Don't concern yourself with flowery transitions, big words, or lengthy, meandering sentences. Your intent should be to communicate what needs to be said as quickly, clearly, and cleanly as possible.
- Be persuasive in your letter and state your needs or wants in a way that makes the recipient want to help you.

3.

I have worked with Widgets Galore, Inc.
in the past and have the greatest confidence
in your products and customer service.
We need the shipment of widgets soon,
however, and I hoped you might
be able to provide me with an idea of when
I can expect them.



***personal pronouns
makes your letter
personable***

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3

Use personal pronouns. It's perfectly fine to use "I," "we," and "you" in your business letter. Refer to yourself as "I" and your reader as "you." This makes your letter personable so the recipient doesn't feel like they're reading a generic, generated message.^[10]

Be aware if you're writing the letter on an organization's behalf. If you're stating the company's perspective, you should use "we" so the reader knows that the company stands behind your statement.

4.

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Passive </p> <p>The sunglasses are not designed or manufactured with attention to their durability.</p> | <p>Active </p> <p>Your company designs and manufactures sunglasses without attention to their durability.</p> |
|--|---|

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4

Use active voice. When describing a situation or making a request, make sure to write in the active voice rather than the passive voice. Passive voice can make your writing ambiguous or impersonal, while active voice is more streamlined and straight to the point.^[11] For example:

- **Passive:** The sunglasses are not designed or manufactured with attention to their durability.
- **Active:** Your company designs and manufactures sunglasses without attention to their durability.

5.

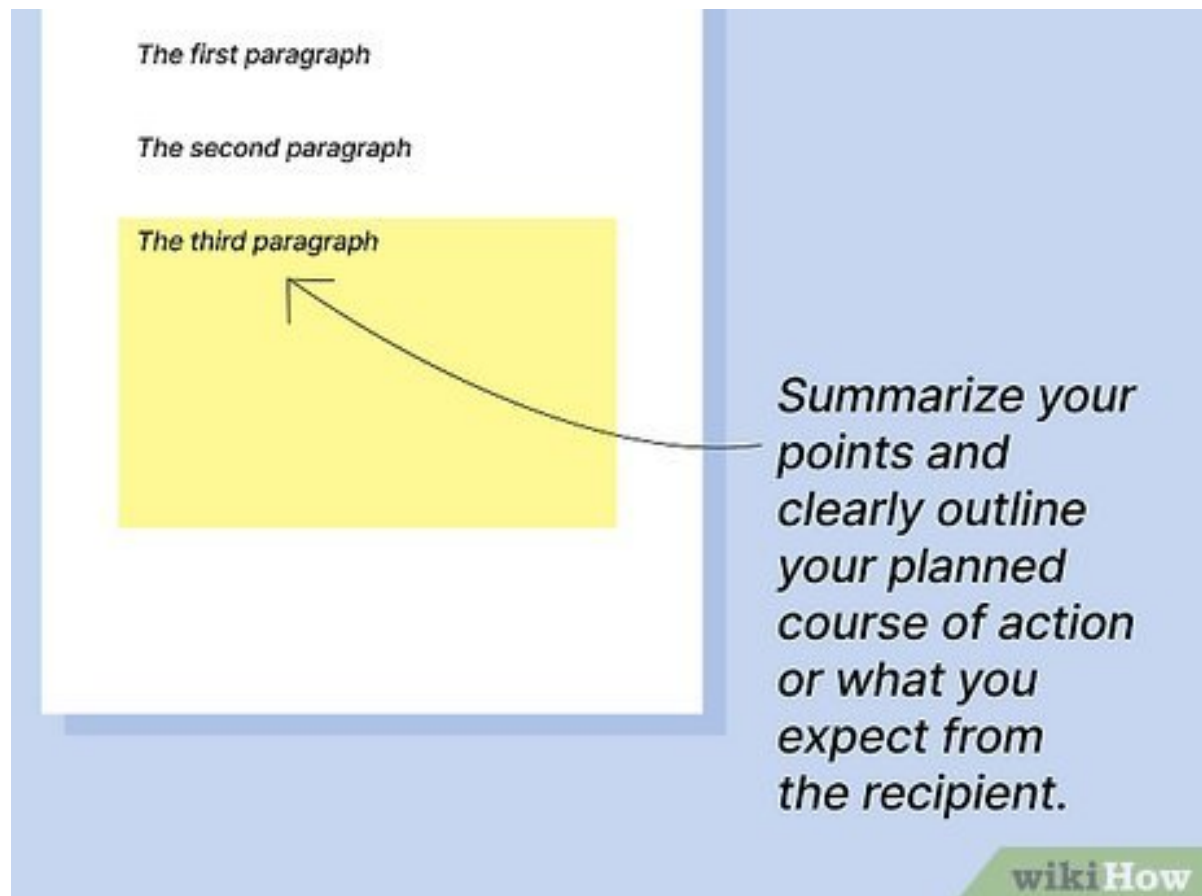


5

Be conversational when appropriate. Letters are written by people to people. You can't build a relationship with generic, impersonal letters. However, stay away from colloquial language or slang such as "you know," "I mean," or "wanna." Keep the tone business-like but be friendly, polite, and helpful.^[12]

Use your best judgment when determining how much personality to reveal. Sometimes adding a little humor is helpful in a business setting, but err on the side of caution before making a joke or telling a story.

6.



6

Wrap it up with a call to action. In the last paragraph or conclusion, summarize your points and clearly outline your planned course of action or what you expect from the recipient. Note that the recipient may contact you with questions or concerns and say thank you for their attention to the matter at hand.\

Your call to action could be as simple as, "Please read the attached document and send your feedback," or as detailed as, "Let's work together to fight climate change by integrating eco-friendly transportation and shipping into our company."

Part 3

Closing the Letter

1.

Recipient's name
Title (if applicable)
Company name
Address

Salutation
The first paragraph

The second paragraph

The third paragraph

Closing

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1

End the letter with a formal but polite closing. The closing, like the salutation, is an indicator of respect and formality. "Sincerely" or "Best regards" are common professional closings. Place this complimentary close 2 lines below the last line of the body of your letter with a comma after it.^[13]

- "Yours sincerely," "Cordially," "Respectfully," "Regards," and "Yours Truly" are also acceptable and respectable.
- "All the best," "Best wishes," "Warm regards," and "Thank you" are slightly less formal but still professional.

2.

The first paragraph

The second paragraph

The third paragraph

Closing

Sign

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2

Sign the letter. Leave about 4 lines of empty space for your handwritten signature. You can either sign the letter after you've printed it before slipping it into an envelope, or you can digitally sign the document or upload your signature into your word processor.^[14]

- Avoid using a colored pen when signing a business letter or professional document. Always opt for black or blue ink.
- If you're signing the letter on someone's behalf, write "pp:" before your signature. This stands for "per procurationem," which means "by agency" or "on behalf of."^[15]

3.

The first paragraph

The second paragraph

The third paragraph

Closing

Sign

Your name

Title

Contact information

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3

Include your typed name and contact information. Beneath your signature, type your name, title, phone number, email address, and any other applicable means of contact. Give each piece of information its own line.

4.

The third paragraph

Closing

Sign

Your name

Title

Contact information

Typist's initials

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4

Add the typist's initials. If someone other than the writer typed up the letter, add this person's initials below the signature block. This way, the recipient can know another individual helped with the process of formatting the letter.^[16]

5.

The third paragraph

Closing

Sign

Your name

Title

Contact information

Typist's initials

Enclosures

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5

Make note of additional documents. If you've enclosed or attached additional documents for the recipient to review, note this a few lines beneath your contact information. This way, the documents won't be lost or forgotten.^[17]

- For example, you may write, "Enclosures (2): resume, brochure."
- "Enclosures" can also be abbreviated as "Encl." or "Enc."

6.

The third paragraph

Closing

Sign

Your name

Title

Contact information

Typist's initials

Enclosures

Additional recipients' names

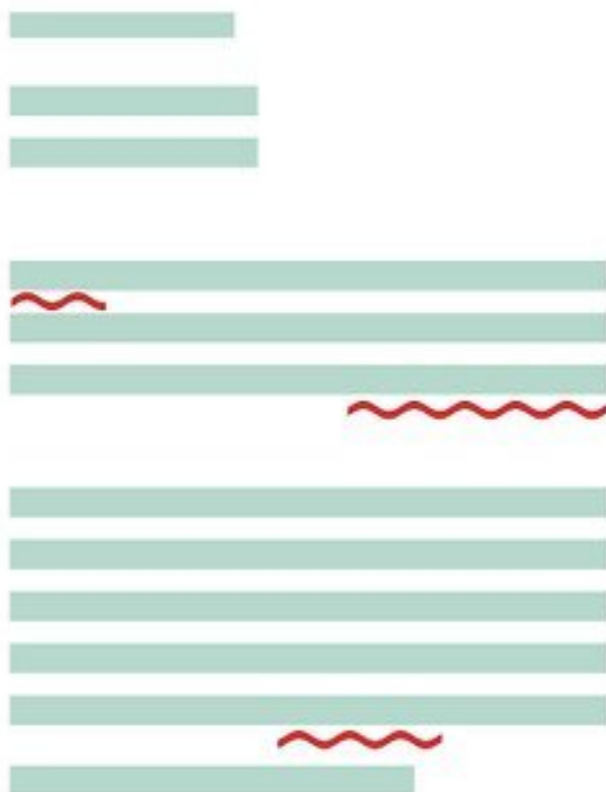
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6

Add additional recipients' names. If you're sending a copy of the letter to another person, include this in the letter by typing "cc:" below the "Enclosures" line. Put the other recipient(s)'s name and title after the colon.^[18]

- For example, write: "cc: Mary Smith, Vice President of Marketing."
- If you're adding more than one name, list the names in alphabetical order and align the second name underneath the first without the "cc:"

7.



7

Edit your letter before mailing it. The last thing you want is a simple spelling error in your business letter, especially when you're trying to be professional. Run your letter through a grammar checker such as [Grammarly](#) or [Writer](#) before printing it out. You can also ask a coworker or friend to read it over.

Ask yourself whether the letter is clear and concise. Are any paragraphs more than 3 or 4 sentences long? If so, determine if you can eliminate any unnecessary statements.

Tips

Business letters are typically 1 page long, but if you go over, repeat the letterhead on the next page with the recipient's name, the date, and the page number.