

Topic: Writing an informal letter /email

How Do You Start an Informal Letter?

Address

Your personal address should be the first thing you write on your letter. It should be located at the top right corner of the page, since you do not always know if someone has your address if they want to reply. Remember also to fill in your country of residence if you are sending the letter abroad.

Format

- Number and street name
- City, state and postal code
- Country

Example

1000 S. Grand Avenue

Los Angeles, CA 90015

United States

Date

The date is usually located below your own address. The most common way to write the date includes the month, day and year. Sometimes, only the month and day are sufficient. In English, the names of months are always capitalized, but there are some differences in formatting between American English and British English. See the table below for examples of each.

Format	British English	American English
A	22nd November 2011	November 22nd, 2011
B	22 November 2011	November 22, 2011
C	22/11/2011	11/22/2011

How Do You Write an Informal Letter?

A informal letter can be written in nearly any way you choose, but there are a few organizational guidelines you can follow if you are unsure of what to write or how to format your letter. The perfect informal letter consists of three sections:

1. Opening
2. Body text
3. Closing

There is one final part of an informal letter that doesn't need listed here: the signature, which consists of no more than a farewell remark and your name. Learn about each of the three main parts of an informal letter below.

Opening

The first step is addressing your reader. But how do you address someone in English?

This is fairly straightforward and is usually not as important as it would be with a business or formal letter. There are still a few things that you should know in terms of addressing someone properly in an informal letter.

First, British English does not employ the use of a period after abbreviated titles, but American English does.

- Mr Johnson (British English)
- Mr. Johnson (American English)

Secondly, if you are sending a letter to a married woman, the correct abbreviation is "Mrs," and if you are sending a letter to a non-married woman, the correct abbreviation is "Ms."

- Mrs. Johnson is the wife of Mr. Johnson
- Ms. Johnson and her fiancé will be married this summer

Choosing whether or not to use a title depends on how well you know the person to which the letter is addressed. If you are on very friendly terms, simply use their first name. The way in which you greet your reader is up to you. The examples below showcase some common greetings.

- Dear Richard,
- Richard,
- Hi Richard,

Be sure to never forget the comma after the name.

Examples of Opening Sentences

Finally, you've reached the part of the letter where you begin to write. Here, let your imagination run free. If you need some ideas to get started, some sample opening sentences are included below. Your opening should be casual and not as stiff as it would be if you were writing a professional or formal letter.

- How are you?
- How have you been?
- How is life treating you?
- How are the kids?

- I hope you are doing well.
- I hope you, Mike, and the kids are having a great time in (location).

Body

The contents of your letter should be written in a personal and friendly tone. However, it's important to adjust your use of language to the person you are writing to. A good way of assessing how you should write is to think about how you would interact with the person you are writing to in real life. Also, keep in mind that the people of England and America are fond of exchanging social niceties.

For example, they like asking a few polite questions "How are you?" or "How was your holiday?" In general, they are not as direct as most Europeans.

Subjects to Include in the Body

- State your reason for writing
- Expand on what you mentioned in the first paragraph
- Ask about the person you are writing to
- Make some concluding remarks
- Invite the person to write back

Closing

The closing is where you summarize your letter and say goodbye to the reader. The examples below offer some ideas of what to write in the closing section of your informal letter.

Examples of Closing Sentences

- I am looking forward to seeing you.
- I can't wait to see you soon.
- I can't wait to hear from you.
- I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.
- I hope to hear from you soon.
- See you soon.
- Send my love to...
- I hope you are doing well.
- Give my regards to...

Signature

In terms of signing off, the choice is yours and you have a lot of freedom here. Below are some commonly used sign-offs that maintain a friendly, informal tone. After you've chosen one that fits the overall tone of your letter, simply sign your name.

Examples of Signatures

- Best wishes,
- Best,

- Kindly,
- Kind regards,
- Best regards,
- Lots of love,
- Love,

TIPS for the IGCSE writing an informal email/letter task

- Take care of **spelling, punctuation and grammar**. It's a writing task after all.
- **Don't use abbreviations and slang** such as 'u' and 'OMG'! This is an international exam, not an actual email to your friend!
- Keep the **tone very light and warm**. An informal letter should be informal.
- Writing a **paragraph for each bullet point** (given in the question) can be a good method of keeping the letter organised.
- **Give personal anecdotes**. Add details that tell the examiner you really know each other. In my sample answer above, I used the names *Steve, Margaret* and *Aunt Marie* without giving any explanation for who they exactly are, because my friend knows who they are!
- Try using **time phrases**. Eg: *shortly after that/after that afternoon/after dinner* etc.
- **Keep to the word limit**. It should be at least 150 words and shouldn't exceed 200 words. However, I remember my teacher telling me it was alright if I wrote 10-15 words in excess. Any more than that, they would deduct marks.



