A printed letter is usually reserved for important professional communications, such as recommendation letters, cover letters, resignation letters, business and legal correspondence, and company communications. Since a letter is a formal mode of communication, you'll want to know how to write one that is professional.

Correct formatting is especially important if you're sending a hard copy to the recipient rather than an email, because the letter needs to fit the page, be clear and concise, be easy to read, and look professional.

Review information on what you need to include when writing a professional letter, examples, and advice on the appropriate font, salutation, spacing, closing, and signature for business correspondence.

**Key Takeaways**

* A formal letter should include details about why you’re writing, an expression of your appreciation to the recipient for considering your request, and your contact information.
* Correspondence can be sent as a written letter or in an email. When sending an email message, list the reason you are writing in the subject line of the message.
* When writing a professional letter, carefully proofread and spellcheck before you print or send it.

**What To Include in a Formal Letter**

Formal correspondence should include the details of why you’re writing, your contact information so the recipient can follow up, a greeting and closing, and your signature.1

**Contact Information (Written Letter):** A written letter should include your and the recipient’s contact information (name, title, company name, address, phone number, email), followed by the date.

**Contact Information (Email):** When sending an email, you don’t need to include the recipient’s contact information. List your contact information at the end of the letter, after your signature.

**Greeting:** Address the letter using a professional greeting and formal title ("Dear Mr./Ms./Dr.").

**Body of Letter**

* **The first paragraph of your letter** should provide an introduction as to why you are writing, so that your reason for contacting the person is obvious.
* Then, in the **following paragraphs**, provide specific details about your request or the information you are providing.
* The **last paragraph** of your letter should reiterate the reason you are writing and thank the reader for reviewing your request. If appropriate, it should also politely ask for a written response or for the opportunity to arrange a meeting to further discuss your request.

**Closing:** Use a [formal sign-off](https://www.thebalancemoney.com/how-to-end-a-letter-2062308), such as "Sincerely" or "Best regards."

**Signature (Written Letter):** End the letter with your handwritten signature followed by your typed name.

**Signature (Email):** Include your typed name followed by your contact information.

**Note**

It’s important to include enough detail so that the recipient understands why you’re writing and the response you expect to the letter.

**Writtten Letter Format**

Here’s a template for each section of a formal letter:

**Your Contact Information** NameAddressCity, State Zip CodePhone NumberEmail Address

**Date**

**Recipient Contact Information**NameTitleCompanyAddressCity, State Zip Code

**Greeting** Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,

Use a **formal salutation**, not a first name, unless you know the person well. If you do not know the person's gender, you can write out their full name. For instance, write, "Dear Pat Crody" instead of "Dear Mr. Crody" or "Dear Ms. Crody." If you do not know the recipient’s name, it’s still common and acceptable to use the old-fashioned “[To Whom It May Concern](https://www.thebalancemoney.com/to-whom-it-may-concern-2062120).”

**Body of Letter**

* **Paragraph 1:**State the reason you are writing, for example, you are asking for something or sharing a piece of information.
* **Paragraph 2:**Provide details about your request or the information you’re sharing.
* **Paragraph 3:**If necessary, include additional information on the purpose of your letter.
* **Paragraph 4:**Thank the reader for considering your request, and ask for a response to your letter.

**Closing**Best regards,

**Signature**Handwritten signature (use black or blue ink to sign a written letter)

**Typed Signature**  
Your typed name

**Email Letter Format**

Here’s a template for each section of a professional email:

**Subject Line**  
Subject: Your Name — Reason for Writing

**Greeting**Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,

**Body of Message**Your message should be two or three paragraphs at most and should explain why you’re writing and what you’re requesting.

**Closing**Sincerely,

**Typed Signature and Contact Information**  
Mikala Schwartz  
mikala.schwartz@email.com  
617-123-1234

**Note**

When sending email correspondence, include the reason you are writing in the subject line of the message. List your contact information under your typed signature at the end of the message.

**Letter Template to Download**

Here is a [letter template that you can download](https://files.thebalancemoney.com/Letters/TheBalance_Letter_2063479_1_2022.docx) (compatible with Google Docs and Word Online), or review the text version below.

[Download the Word Template](https://files.thebalancemoney.com/Letters/TheBalance_Letter_2063479_1_2022.docx)