

20

Routine Business Letters

Business correspondence is a link between people.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understanding the differences between personal and business letters and discuss the letter writing process
- Knowing the form and structure of business letters
- Identifying five characteristics of good business letters
- Knowing how to write inquiry letters requesting information or seeking clarifications and write replies to inquiry letters
- Knowing how to write letters placing orders
- Knowing how to write instruction letters
- Knowing how to write letters urging action
- Knowing how to write complaint and adjustment letters

LETTER WRITING SKILLS

Business correspondence is an instrument of decision making in the business world. Its significance has increased with growing changes in modern life. Infact, a letter is an important channel of communication

Letters reinforce
personal and business
relations.

used to send information outside an organisation. As it helps to reinforce professional and business relations, it is a positive instrument of professional exchange of ideas, opinions, and information. Everyday business dealings and the ordinary activities of business would not be possible without letters.

In order to succeed in today's competitive environment, we need effective letter writing skills because we may have to write different kinds of business letters, such as a letter in order to request for services or information, give information, request for action, give instructions or guidelines, express an opinion, reinforce business relations, maintain good public relations, or motivate and persuade people.

Personal and Business Letters

A personal letter is an informal letter in the form of a private dialogue, where the writer wants to say something and expects a response to the message. It may follow the norms of private conversation but it normally does not follow any set pattern of writing and the writer is free to choose any style or pattern that suits his/her mood and content. Thus, personal letters are varied in their language, style, tone, presentation and content. Read the letters of Nehru, Ambedkar and Ghalib, and you will notice a personal touch in each of them, which make them different from each other.

A business letter, on the other hand, is a formal written message, written in a conventional form for a specific audience to meet a specific need. It is also a form of dialogue, where the writer wants to say something and expects a response to the message. However, it is more structured as it follows a set pattern in form and style.

LETTER WRITING PROCESS

It is easier to write an effective business letter while following a systematic writing plan. Letter writing is a typical composition process that involves prewriting, writing, and post-writing.

Prewriting Prewriting involves audience analysis, purpose identification, scope determination, and an analysis of the action desired. The writer should bear in mind the key word APSA that is, Audience, Purpose, Scope, and Action. The process should begin with the writer asking himself/herself the following questions:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Who is my reader/s? | (Audience analysis) |
| 2. Why am I writing? | (Purpose identification) |
| 3. How much should I write? | (Scope determination) |
| 4. What do I want the reader to do? | (An analysis of the action desired) |

Letter writing involves three steps: pre-writing, writing and post-writing.

Once these four questions are answered, half the work is done and the writer is ready to write. Now he/she may do background research, collect relevant information, make a list of the points that he/she wants to cover, or organise his/her thoughts to help him/her write.

Writing Writing involves organising the matter, outlining what needs to be written and writing the first draft. Several writing strategies may be used, which includes brainstorming, freewriting, and mind mapping. Brainstorming is a planning technique in which you list ideas as they come to your mind whereas freewriting is a process that allows you to express your ideas without worrying about spelling, grammatical mistakes, or organizational problems. Mind mapping is a clustering technique that takes advantage of your mind's natural ability to organise information. ③ *visually organized information*

Post-writing Once the first draft has been written, it should be revised, edited and evaluated. Revising is the process of improving the content, the layout, and the sentence structure of the letter while editing involves correcting its grammar, spelling, punctuation, format, and structure. Evaluating, on the other hand, refers to the process of critically examining the letter to ensure that it can achieve its purpose.

Revised, edited & evaluated

FORM AND STRUCTURE

While writing a business letter, attention must be paid to, both, the parts of a business letter and to the choice of format. As a letter with a poor and loose structure cannot get the attention that it may seek.

correct format and standard writing conventions should be followed while designing the letter. In order to ensure clarity of presentation, the letter should be divided into sections and sub-sections, each with a clear purpose and place in the body of the letter.

Business letters contain ten elements: sender's address, date line, reference, inside address, subject, salutation, body, complimentary close, signature and enclosures.

Parts of a Business Letter

A business letter includes ten elements, that is, sender's address, date, reference, inside address, subject, salutation, body, complimentary close, signature, and enclosures. Figure 20.3 shows the structure of a business letter.

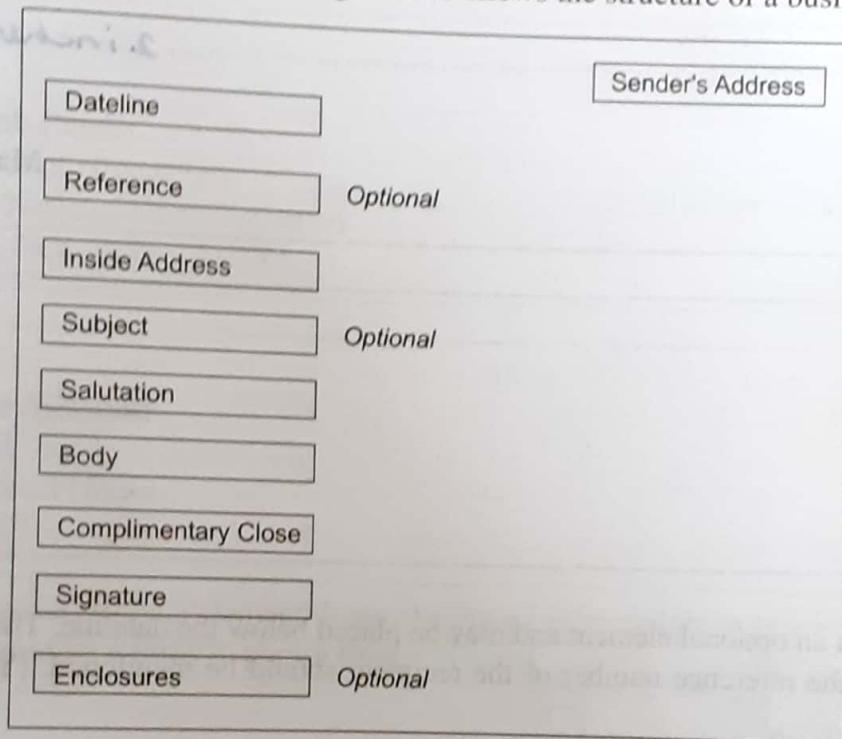


Fig. 20.1 Structure of a Business Letter

Sender's Address The writer's address should be put in the top right hand corner. The street address, city and pin code, telephone, fax, and e-mail address should be mentioned. The writer should not include his/her name or title, as it is included in the letter's closing. If a printed letterhead is used, the address should not be written again.

Examples:

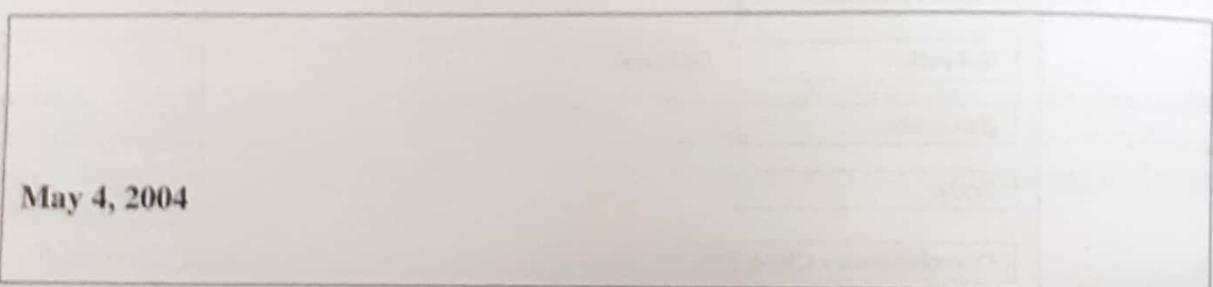
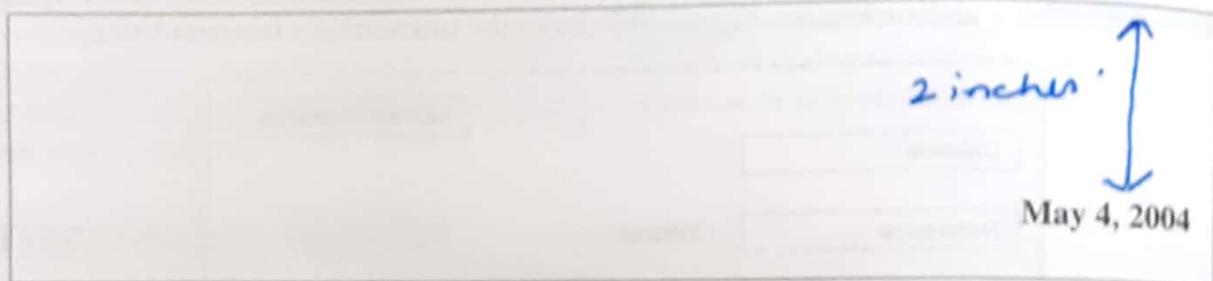
205 Barrackpore Trunk Road
Kolkata-700108

Nalco Bhawan
P-1 Nayapalli
Bhubaneshwar-750013

B-3/16, Janakpuri
New Delhi-110058

Date The date line is used to indicate the date the letter was written. The month, day, and year should be written two inches from the top of the page.

Examples:



Reference This is an optional element and may be placed below the dateline. The writer's reference number as well as the reference number of the recipient should be mentioned. (Your Reference/Our Reference).

Examples:

Reference: AVS/SP/04/329

Our Ref: ATC/RS/127
Your Ref: AVS/SP/04/329

Inside Address The inside address is the receiver's address. Include a personal title such as Ms, Mrs, Mr, or Dr. The inside address begins one inch below the date. It should be left justified, no matter which format is used.

Examples:

Mr Nicholas Parker
 Managing Director
 Nicholas Parker UK Ltd
 Royal Mint, Tower Bridge
 London EC3N 4HJ, UK

→ always
 is
 left +
 (one
 inch
 below
 date).

Prof Pran Nath Pandit
 Director, School of Humanities
 Indira Gandhi National Open University
 Maidan Garhi, New Delhi – 110068

The Executive Assistant
 British Council
 16 Camac Street, 1st Floor
 Kolkata 700 017

Subject This is also an optional element. It may be placed either before or below the salutation. The topic of the letter should be written in phrase form.

before or after
salutation.

→ No sentence.
 (only phrase)

SUBJECT: Purchase of Sixty Scanners

Dear Mr. Chopra,

Dear Mr. Chopra,

SUBJECT: Purchase of Sixty Scanners

Salutation As salutation is a greeting used to address the receiver of the letter, it should be the as that used in the inside address, including the personal title. Use the personal title and the surname should be

followed by either a comma or a colon. Formal phrases such as "Dear sir/Dear madam/Dear Customer" may also be used if the name of the recipient is not known.

Examples :

Mr Nicholas Parker
 Managing Director
 Nicholas Parker UK Ltd
 Royal Mint, Tower Bridge
 London EC3N 4HJ, UK

Dear Mr Parker:

Prof Pran Nath Pandit
 Director, School of Humanities
 Indira Gandhi National Open University
 Maidan Garhi, New Delhi – 110068
 Dear Prof Pandit,

Ms Lara David
 Personnel Manager
 International Consultants Pvt Ltd
 G-13/6, South Extension, Part-2
 New Delhi – 110049
 Dear Ms. David,

Body As the body of a business letter contains the message of the letter, it must be organised carefully. It should be divided into three distinct parts, that is, the opening segment, the middle segment, and the closing segment. In the first segment, which may consist of one or more than one paragraph, a friendly opening can be made and then a statement of the main point. The purpose of a business letter is generally found in the opening segment. The middle segment is the part in which all the details that support ideas are included the main points. It may begin justifying the importance of the main point, and the next few paragraphs may contain more information and supporting details. The closing segment of a letter usually restates the purpose of the letter and states what action the writer wants the reader to take.

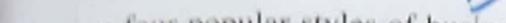
The body of a letter contains an opening stating the main idea, a middle with details, and an action closing

Complimentary Close The complimentary close begins one line after the last body paragraph. The first word should be capitalised and four lines should be left between the closing and the sender's name for a signature. The complimentary close can be very formal (Sincerely/Respectfully) or somewhat less formal (Yours sincerely/Yours truly/Best regards).

Signature The signature contains the writer's name and title and, in some cases, the name of the organisation or company.

Enclosures This is an optional element, which may be included in the letter. If any documents are enclosed along with the letter, they should be listed at the end of the letter.

Business Letter Formats



There are four popular styles of business letter formatting, that is, block, modified block, semi-block, and simplified. Although any of them may be used according to the writer's convenience and the need of the reader, consistency should be maintained and styles should not be mixed.

Business letter formats include block, modified block, semi-block, and simplified.

Block Format The block style shown in Fig. 20.2 is a popular letter format as it is very simple and easy to use. In this style all parts of a letter, that is, date-line, inside address, salutation, body, and so on, begin at left. The paragraphs are not indented. It is better not to justify line endings for better readability. Fig. 20.4 illustrates block style formatting.

<p>June 15, 2004</p> <p>Mr D K Paul Personnel Manager Alpha Petrochemical Limited 621, Ahuja Chambers, Nariman Point Mumbai-400 021</p> <p>Dear Mr Paul:</p> <p>It is with pleasure that I accept your offer of an Executive Trainee position at the production division of your company. I assure you that I will put all my skills and experience to work for APL.</p> <p>As desired, I can join you by the end of September, 2004. I am grateful to you for giving me this opportunity to work with you. I look forward to meeting you in September.</p> <p>Yours sincerely,</p> <p>Sd/- Ravi Kapoor</p>

Fig. 20.2 Block Format

*extreme
all left*

→ Date
→ complimentary close
→ sign block
high

Modified Block Format The modified block style, shown in Fig. 20.3, is a modified version of the block style. In this style, the date line, the complimentary close, and the signature block begin at the centre of the page to align with the closing lines. The paragraphs are not indented and the line endings are unjustified. Study Fig. 20.3 to understand modified block style formatting.

Mr D K Paul

Personnel Manager

Alpha Petrochemical Limited

621, Ahuja Chambers, Nariman Point

Mumbai-400 021

June 15, 2004

Dear Mr Paul

It is with pleasure that I accept your offer of an Executive Trainee position at the production division of your company. I assure you that I will put all my skills and experience to work for APL.

As desired, I can join you by the end of September, 2004. I am grateful to you for giving me this opportunity to work with you. I look forward to meeting you in September.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/-

Ravi Kapoor

Fig. 20.3 Modified Block Format

Semi-Block Format The semi-block style shown in Fig. 20.4 is similar to modified block format except that each paragraph is indented. The line endings are unjustified.

Mr D K Paul

Personnel Manager

Alpha Petrochemical Limited

621, Ahuja Chambers, Nariman Point

Mumbai-400 021

June 15, 2004

Dear Mr. Paul:

It is with pleasure that I accept your offer of an Exucutive Trainee position at the production division of your company. I assure you that I will put all my skills and experience to work for APL.

As desired, I can join you by the end of September, 2004. I am grateful to you for giving me this opportunity to work with you. I look forward to meeting you in September.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/-

Ravi Kapoor

Fig. 20.4 Semi-block Format

Simplified Format The simplified format resembles the block style except that the salutation and complimentary close are omitted. It may also include a subject line in capital letters. This informal style of formatting is gaining popularity. Study Fig. 20.5

June 15, 2004

Mr D K Paul
 Personnel Manager
 Alpha Petrochemical Limited
 621, Ahuja Chambers, Nariman Point
 Mumbai-400 021

ACCEPTING JOB OFFER

It is with pleasure that I accept your offer of an Executive Trainee position at the production division of your company. I assure you that I will put all my skills and experience to work for APL.

As desired, I can join you by the end of September, 2004. I am grateful to you for giving me this opportunity to work with you. I look forward to meeting you in September.

Ravi Kapoor

Fig. 20.5 Simplified Format

⇒ Salutation & Complimentary Close from Block format are omitted.

Progress Check 1

Study the following layout of a business letter. The format is not correct. Rewrite the letter, making the needed changes in the structure and the format. You may use any of the four acceptable letter formats.

May 16, 2004

31 C, Lake Temple Road
 Kolkata-700 029

The Public Relations Manager
 STCI LIMITED
 Krishna Chambers, 59, SirVithaldas Thackersey Marg
 New Marine Lanes, Mumbai-400 020

Dear Sir,
 Please refer to your letter dated May 7 ...

Sincerely,

Sd/-
 Avinash Goel

STYLE AND TONE

A good business letter can get you a job interview, get you off the hook, or get you money.

Malcolm Forbes

A good business letter can increase your chances of achieving whatever you want whereas a bad business letter may go unnoticed. What makes a letter effective? This can be understood by comparing the following two letters about the same topic. Read the direct request letter as shown in Fig. 20.6:

AVY TRADING CORPORATION

Court Lane, Civil Lines, Delhi

Web: www.avytrad.com

Phone: (011) 2547325

Fax: (011) 2547326

April 24, 2004

Mr Ravi Malhotra

Sales Manager, Reva Computers, Dealers in HP

Ajmer Road, Jaipur-302006

Dear Mr Malhotra,

We saw your advertisement in *The Times of India* about one of your important products. The advertisement caught our attention because we are interested in this product. In fact, we want to equip our corporate office with modern facilities and we would like to buy this product.

However, we cannot send the purchase order unless we know more about this product. Send us more information about the product as soon as possible. We want to know many things, which include product specification and special features of this model of the product, details of discount for bulk purchase, an estimate for the cost of the product, and details regarding terms of business and delivery dates.

Respond to this letter as early as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Rakesh Mathur

Purchase Manager

Fig. 20.6 Direct Request Letter

It is evident that this is not a good business letter for many reasons. First, it is not clearly written as the language used is not specific and concrete and the references are not clear. We do not know "which advertisement" or "what product" the writer is talking about. Second, the letter lacks courtesy and a tone of goodwill is missing. The tone is inappropriate and the attitude is negative. Look at the following sentences used in the letter:

- (a) ... we cannot send the purchase order unless we know more about this product.
- (b) Send us more information about the product as soon as possible.
- (c) Respond to this letter as early as possible.

It seems the reader is under obligation to respond to the letter and to send the desired information. Finally, the letter is not concise. Now, read the following revised version of the letter (Fig. 20.7) which is more specific, precise and courteous:

- Be specific
- Be positive attitude

→ Be courteous

~~too~~ → concise

AVY TRADING CORPORATION

Court Lane, Civil Lines, Delhi

WEB: www.avytrad.com

PHONE: (011) 2547325

FAX: (011) 2547326

April 24, 2004

Mr Ravi Malhotra
Sales Manager, Reva Computers, Dealers in HP
Ajmer Road, Jaipur-3020006

Dear Mr Malhotra,

Please refer to your advertisement in the April 22 issue of *The Times of India* (New Delhi edition) about the HP ScanJet 3200C scanner.

Our company is interested in buying sixty scanners for our corporate office. We would be glad if you could send us more information about the product.

Specifically, we need the following information:

- product specification and special features of HP ScanJet 3200C model;
- details of discount for bulk purchase;
- an estimate for the cost of sixty units; and
- terms of business and delivery dates.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Sd/-

Rakesh Mathur

Purchase Manager

Fig. 20.7 Revised Direct Request Letter

As is evident, this letter is clearer, more precise, and courteous. How is this achieved? Note that the second revised letter

- uses clear and specific words, expressions, and references

Examples:

- ... your advertisement in the April 22 issue of The Times of India (New Delhi edition) about the HP ScanJet 3200C scanner.
 - Our company is interested in buying sixty scanners for our corporate office.
 - ... product specification and special features of HP ScanJet 3200C model
 - an estimate for the cost of sixty units
- uses polite, positive, and encouraging phrases

Examples:

- Please refer to your advertisement...
 - We would be glad if you could send us more information about the product.
- emphasises the "You attitude" instead of the "We attitude" of the previous letter,

Examples:

<i>First letter (We attitude)</i>	<i>Second letter (You attitude)</i>
We saw your advertisement...	Please refer to your advertisement...
...we know more about this product...	...you could send us more information...

- uses direct and concise language

Examples:

<i>First letter (Indirect language)</i>	<i>Second letter (Concise and direct)</i>
The advertisement caught our attention because we are interested in this product. As a matter of fact, we want to equip our corporate office with modern facilities and we would like to buy this product..	Our company is interested in buying sixty scanners for its corporate office.

- uses positive attitude

Examples:

<i>First letter (Negative attitude)</i>	<i>Second letter (Positive attitude)</i>
...we cannot send the purchase order unless we know more about this product.	We would be glad if you could send us more information about the product.

- and closes with an expression of goodwill.

Example:

We look forward to hearing from you.

From the above examples it is clear that good business letters are characterised by appropriate style and tone. An effective style involves clear content, courtesy and consideration, conciseness, correct tone and correct attitude. In short, the five C's of business letters should always be remembered:

C—Clarity

C—Courtesy

C—Conciseness

C—Correct tone

C—Correct attitude

Clarity A clearly written letter is one that is immediately understood by the reader. In order to be clear, simple, familiar and specific words and expressions and clear references should be used. Vague and unclear words and expressions should be avoided. It is important that the message is simple and clear so that the readers are able to understand and respond to it accordingly. In addition, short sentences and paragraphs should be used and the letter should separate ideas into paragraphs and guide the reader through the ideas with appropriate linkers and connectives. Table 20.1 shows how this can be done:

Table 20.1

Original version	Revised version
Kindly be advised to make us aware of a few important points such as your service charges, methods of payment, concession schemes, and so on.	Please send us details regarding your service charges, methods of payment, concession schemes, and so on.
With reference to your inquiry last week, we would like to inform you that the information that you want can be sent within a week.	Thank you for your April 14 letter, asking about our 2005 training schedule. We would send you the schedule by April 28.
It may kindly be noted that there was a serious blunder in my last month's bank statement as there was a transfer of Rs 25,000 from my current account to my loan account, causing me much embarrassment due to the fact that several checks bounced.	I would like to point out an error in my August bank statement. In July, the bank transferred Rs 25,000 from my current account to my loan account. As a result, several checks bounced.
It may be requested that a refund of my deposit on the round trip air tickets bought last week from your firm is what we really need because we will neither be able to depart as scheduled for the island nor will be able to return as planned due to a very urgent company seminar during the same period.	I am writing to request a refund of my deposit on three round trip air tickets from New Delhi to Port Blair. We were to depart January 15 for the island and return to New Delhi on January 26. However, we have to cancel our vacation due to a very urgent company seminar from January 17 to January 24.

Courtesy A good business letter must be courteous as the basic principle of business interaction is mutual understanding and respect. The letter must reflect courtesy and consideration, as the reader is under no obligation to do what the writer requests. Positive and encouraging phrases should be used and irritating phrases and expressions should be avoided. Moreover, it is important to try to build goodwill by using goodwill expressions that might help establish a long-term business relationship. Table 20.2 gives a few examples:

Table 20.2

Original version	Revised version
You must send the refund to me at the address below. We want you to send us more information about your Executive Development courses. You have no other option but to talk to your accounts manager about the problem in my accounts.	Please send the refund to me at the address below. We would be glad if you could send us more information about your Executive Development courses. Please talk to your accounts manager about the problem in my accounts. I look forward to hearing from you.

(Contd.)

Original version	Revised version
<p>Please be advised that you are supposed to make the adjustment to my bill so that I can pay the other charges.</p> <p>You should not forget that I have been your customer for several years and always did business with you. Under the circumstances it is your moral duty to see that we come to a satisfactory agreement on this matter.</p>	<p>Please make the adjustment to my bill. I will be ready to pay the other charges. I appreciate your assistance in this matter.</p> <p>I have been your customer for over ten years and always enjoyed good business relation with you. In light of our long business association, I hope we can come to a satisfactory agreement on this matter.</p>

Conciseness Business letters should be concise and direct. The writer has to ensure that the letter makes its point in the fewest words possible. Unnecessary words, wordy expressions, empty words, wordy compound prepositions, repetitions, and redundancies must be avoided. In order to attain exact correspondence between the message and one's written expression, words should be used appropriately. Moreover, direct language should be used in order to avoid misunderstanding and confusion. Indirect expressions, rhetoric, ornamentation, or exaggeration should be avoided. Table 20.3 gives some examples:

Table 20.3

Original version	Revised version
<p>It should be clear to everyone and there should be no doubt about the fact that the company would never be the one that encourages incompetence and lethargy. (28)</p> <p>I would like to express my gratitude to you for sending our consultancy fee. We have received your cheque No. 233632 dated 12 March 2004 for Rs. 75,000/- on April 15, 2004. (32)</p>	<p>The company does not encourage incompetence and lethargy. (8)</p>
<p>I am very happy to inform you that the report on student involvement in academic decision-making completed for your research department is being sent to you along with this letter. (31)</p>	<p>Thank you for the cheque No. 233632 dated March 12, 2004 for Rs 75,000/- towards consultancy fee. (7)</p>
<p>It was a great pleasure for us to know that you have started Oriental Credit and Finance services at Bangalore. As desired by you, we are pleased to send the items you request. (33)</p>	<p>Enclosed is the report on student involvement in academic decision making, completed for your research department. (16)</p>
<p>We are happy to inform you that IDBI bank is a completely professional investment organisation as you will find a competent team of qualified and trained investment advisors who are waiting to guide and fulfill your investment needs. (38)</p>	<p>We are delighted to hear that Oriental Credit and Finance Services are at Bangalore and are pleased to send the items you requested. (24)</p>
	<p>At IDBI bank, a team of qualified investment advisor is waiting to guide and fulfill your investment needs. (18)</p>

Correct Tone Tone in a business letter refers to the manner or mood of expression. It helps establish the relationship that the writer wishes to establish with the reader. A change of tone leads to a change in the emotional effect of an expression. For example, the sentence "Your application for the post of Assistant Manager has been received" will have a dull effect on the reader due to its tactless tone while its revised statement "Thank you for your application for the post of Assistant Manager" will have a positive effect on the reader due to its tactful tone.

It is important to use a tone appropriate to the situation in order to adapt one's expression to the demands of the situation and the needs of the readers. A tactless or negative tone can lead to misunderstanding, resulting in a negative response from the reader. Therefore, the tone should be formal, tactful, personal, and positive. Moreover, a conversational tone gives a personal touch to letters. Table 20.4 gives some examples:

Table 20.4

<i>Original version</i>	<i>Revised version</i>
As we have given the job to another candidate, we can not entertain your application.	Thank you for your application for a sales position in our company. However, the position has already been filled. Nevertheless, we have kept your resume for future use.
Send your consultant on Friday morning at 10.30 to discuss the training schedule for our company executives.	We would be glad if your consultant could call on Friday morning at 10.30 to discuss the training schedule for our company executives.
In light of the report of your current credit record, your application for a MSM credit account has been rejected. We are sorry to say that credit can not be extended at this time.	We genuinely appreciate your application of March 16 for a MSM credit account. After receiving a report of your current credit record, we find that credit cannot be extended at this time.
We need more time to complete the project report.	To complete the project report to the best of your satisfaction, please give us an extension of ten days.

Correct Attitude Attitude in a business letter refers to the reflection of the opinion of the writer on the reader. Using the correct attitude involves proper understanding of the role of positive thinking in business interaction. The writer has to analyse the communicative context. The following guidelines can help in using correct attitude in business letters:

- In order to establish goodwill and a positive always use and a long-term relationship with the reader, avoid a poor and negative attitude and a positive attitude. This is more important in bad news letters, rejections, refusals, denials and complaints.
- Tailor the letter to the needs of the reader.
- Use the "You attitude" instead of "I attitude" or "We attitude".

Table 20.6 gives some examples:

Table 20.5

<i>Original version</i>	<i>Revised version</i>
As you do not have a current account in our bank, we can not process your request.	Please open a current account in our bank so that we are able to process your request.
As you have not given any attention to our request for a detailed report on your business activities, we will not be able to finalise the deal by the end of July 2004.	We would appreciate your immediate attention to our request for a detailed report on your business activities because we are planning to finalise the deal by the end of July 2004.
We will not be able to process your order because your business terms are too vague and are unacceptable to us.	Please send us your specific and clear business terms so that we can process your order.

Progress Check 2

Read the following business letter and rewrite it making the needed changes in the language, style, tone, and attitude of the letter:

Dear Mr Chopra,

I have gone through the letter sent by your office last week. Please be advised that our company can accept the offer to which the letter refers because it would be beneficial for our company in several ways. Infact, we have been looking for such innovative programmes for our junior executives for a long time but no training and consultancy company came forward with such a proposal. You are the first company to send us this interesting proposal.

I have gone through the structure of the workshop and find it exhaustive and appropriate. However, the workshop may not be effective unless it includes some project work relating to some important areas of artificial intelligence. Moreover, our company may not be able to upgrade the knowledge level in this regard on a continuous basis unless project work is included.

There is no doubt that you have worked hard to design the structure of the programme so that it is suited to our needs. Nevertheless, we would not be able to take any action unless we receive your final proposal. Send this positively by the end of May, 2004.

With regards,

Yours sincerely

(RS Prasad)

INQUIRY LETTERS

Letters Of Inquiry

Everyday business transaction consist of writing inquiry letters that request information or seek clarifications. We may need to write inquiry letters to individuals, firms, organisations, or institutions because we need some information. A letter of inquiry should be organised into three parts:

Inquiry letters maintain a courteous tone, mention and explain the request clearly, and close with a goodwill expression.

Opening The latter should open with a clear statement that tells the reader why the letter is being written. It is important to make the purpose of the letter clear in the very first paragraph. Questions or information needed should be listed in a clear and specific way.

Body The body gives details that explain the request. The writer may tell the reader what he/she is working on, and why he/she needs the requested information. He/She may also provide necessary details that the reader needs to know in order to respond to the inquiry. If the request involves more than one question they should be listed.

Closing The letter should be closed with a goodwill expression seeking an action-oriented response, and specifying the action that the reader should take.

Fig. 20.8 an enquiry letter

NATIONAL TOURS AND TRAVELS PVT LTD
 M-15/6, South Extension, New Delhi-110 049
www.nationaltours.com

May 18, 2004

Ms Savitha Kumar
 Training Manager
 Sama Corporate Training Pvt Ltd
 D-28/15, Ring Road, Delhi-110 052

Dear Ms Kumar:

Please provide information regarding training courses for field staff involved in aggressive selling of tour packages.

We presently have 24 sales trainees who need intensive training in sales and marketing skills. Kindly send us the following information to enable us to choose the right course for them:

1. List of the courses best suitable for our sales staff
2. Duration of each course
3. Course content
4. Fee structure

We would be glad if you could send us the information before May 25. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Sd/-
 P R Mehta
 General Manager

Fig. 20.8 Letter of Inquiry

Replies To Inquiry Letters

Two kinds of replies may be written to letters of inquiry, that is, letters giving the information asked for and letters of regret.

Letters Complying with Requests A direct approach should be used in such letters. A positive response to an inquiry may be organized into three parts as shown in Fig. 20.9:

Opening Purpose of the letter.

Body The requested information and other relevant details.

Closing A goodwill expression.

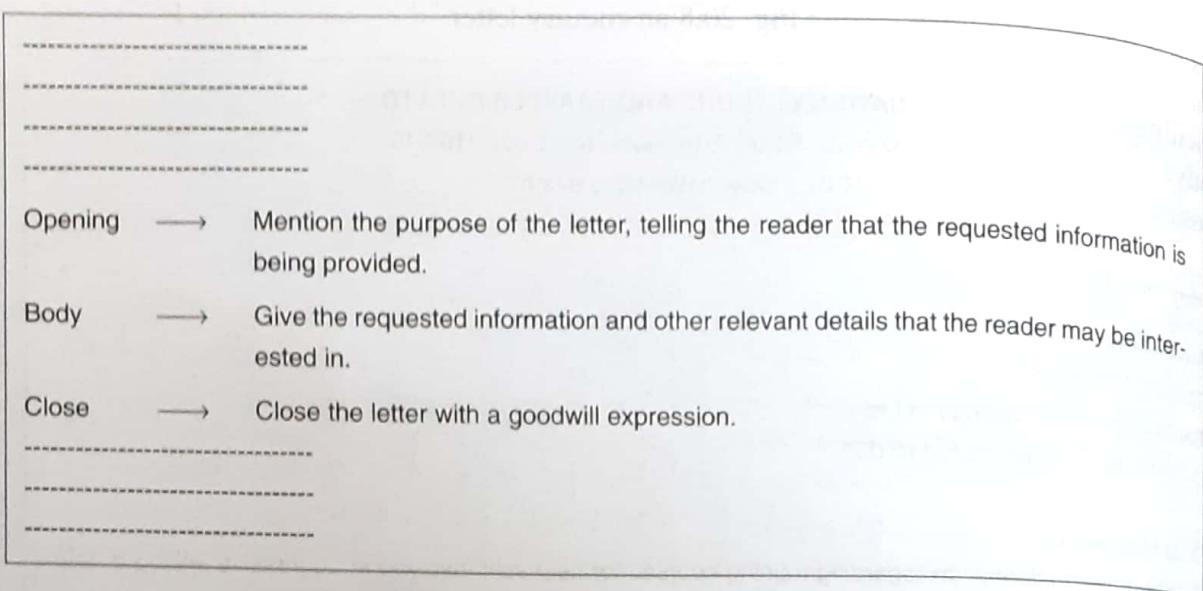


Fig. 20.9 Positive Response To Inquiry

Now read the following sample letter in Fig. 20.10:

	REVA COMPUTERS
	Dealers in HP
	Ajmer Road, Jaipur-302006
May 8, 2004	
Rakesh Mathur Purchase Manager Avy Trading Corporation Court Lane, Civil Lines, Delhi	
Dear Mr. Mathur,	
As you requested, we are sending you detailed information about the HP ScanJet 3200C model, and our business terms, in the enclosed booklet.	
We are the main dealers of HP scanners in North India and would be privileged to do business with reputed companies like yours. You could also visit our website www.revacomputer.com to receive more information about our company and a list of our customers.	
We hope that the enclosed information will help you make your decision. Just send us an e-mail if you need any other information. We look forward to receiving a purchase order from you.	
Sincerely, Sd/- Mr. Ravi Malhotra Sales Manager	

Fig. 20.10 Positive Response to Inquiry

Letters not Complying with Requests An indirect plan should be used in such letters. Fig. 20.11 illustrates the three parts:

- Opening:** Buffer statement
- Body:** Explanation
- Closing:** Goodwill expression.

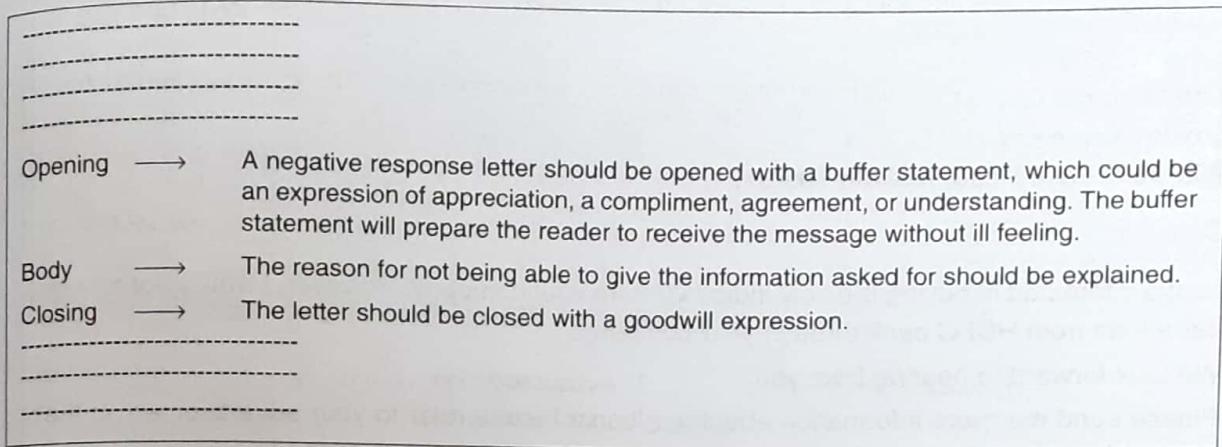


Fig. 20.11 Negative Response to Inquiry

A sample negative response letter is presented in Fig. 20.12:

SF Consultants

285611 906/845, Excel
Nariman Point Mumbai-400 021

Dalamal Tower
May 10, 2004
Ms Lily Thomas
26-B, Rana Pratap Marg
Lucknow

Dear Ms Thomas

We appreciate your efforts to improve the professional knowledge and skills of your sales staff, and would be privileged to arrange training courses for reputed companies like yours.

We receive a large number of requests from big companies to organise training programmes for their sales staff. However, we conduct only ten sales training courses in a year. We have already finalised the list of the companies for whom we are going to conduct the courses during 2004-2005. Therefore, we are not in a position to give you the course details, and other related information for this year.

We thank you for your interest in our organisation and its training packages. If you wish, we would be glad to include your name in the list of companies for 2005-2006 training year.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely,
Sd/-
S. Asfar Iqbal
Training Manager

Fig. 20.12 Negative Response to a Letter of Inquiry

Progress Check 3

Rewrite the following inquiry letter by making the needed changes in its organisation.

251, Park Street
Kolkata-700 016

June 16, 2004

The Manager (Sales)

Lexus Motors Ltd.

209, AJC Bose Road, Kolkata-700 017

Dear Sir,

I am interested in buying the new Indica V2 from your company. However, I would like to take car a loan from HDFC bank through your company.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Please send me more information about car loans. Please refer to your advertisement in the June 14 issue of *The Times of India* about the new Indica V2.

Sincerely,

Sd/-

Vikrant Vishal

Letters placing orders clearly mention items/services, quantity/number, price, insurance instructions, payment method, and delivery schedule

LETTERS PLACING ORDERS

A letter placing an order is a straight forward written message that orders supplies, services, or merchandise. To order items by letter, the direct pattern may be used, as shown in Fig. 20.13.

Opening → The letter should be begun in order language making it clear that it is a supply/purchase order.

Body → The order items should be listed and specific data such as detailed description of the item/items, catalogue reference, quantity/number, price, insurance instructions, clear address, and such other information that might be necessary to execute the supply order should be included.

Closing → The time-period for the delivery of the item/items must be mentioned and mode of payment must be stated. The letter should be closed with an expression of appreciation and goodwill.

Fig. 20.13 Placing an Order

A sample order letter is given Fig. 20.14:

AVT TRADING CORPORATION											
Court Lane, Civil Lines, Delhi											
Mr Ravi Malhotra Sales Manager Reva Computers Ajmer Road, Jaipur-302006	May 23, 2004										
<p>Dear Mr Malhotra,</p> <p>Please send the following items on the business terms agreed upon:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Catalogue No</th> <th>Item Description</th> <th>Quantity</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>128</td> <td>HP Pavilion T2501 Desktop</td> <td>05</td> </tr> <tr> <td>236</td> <td>HP ScanJet 3200C</td> <td>05</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>We would be grateful if you could send the items duly insured. The insurance charges may be included in the bill.</p> <p>We would appreciate receiving the items by June 15, 2004. As desired, we would make the payment by crossed bank draft.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Sd/- Rakesh Mathur Purchase Manager</p>			Catalogue No	Item Description	Quantity	128	HP Pavilion T2501 Desktop	05	236	HP ScanJet 3200C	05
Catalogue No	Item Description	Quantity									
128	HP Pavilion T2501 Desktop	05									
236	HP ScanJet 3200C	05									

Fig. 20.14 Order Letter

INSTRUCTION LETTERS

Instruction letters specify the instructions with specific details, and focus on the required action.

A letter of instruction is a simple routine letter that consists of directions for the reader. A letter of instruction should be organised, as shown in Fig. 20.15, into three parts:

Opening: Purpose and instruction/instructions

Body: Details

Closing: Focus on action and a courteous close

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Opening | → The letter should be opened with a clear statement of purpose followed by the instruction/instructions. If the letter includes several instructions, they could be numbered or the sequence of actions can be logically connected in instructions by using sequence words, that is, First, Second, Then, Next, After that, Later, Finally, and so on. |
| Body | → The reader should be given necessary details regarding what action he/she should take. |
| Closing | → Focusing on the required action, the letter should be closed with a courteous conclusion. |

Fig. 20.15 Letter Giving Instructions

A sample instruction letter is given in Fig. 20.16:

April 21, 2004

Mr Girjashankar
Chief Manager, State Bank of India
ISM Branch, Dhanbad

Dear Mr. Girjashankar:

I am writing to inform you that I have lost my cheque book number 233601. Please issue me a new cheque book. Also, stop any payment against any cheque bearing the number 233601 to 233650.

I have signed the cheque requisition slip and handed over the same to my office peon. I am sending him to collect the cheque book. I would be obliged if you could give him the cheque book.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A K Mishra
Dept of Mining Engineering
Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad

Fig. 20.16 Letter of Instruction



LETTERS URGING ACTION

Letters urging action are persuasive messages that urge the readers to do what the writer wants. Motivating someone to do what we want is not simple. It needs a tactful beginning, a reasonable approach and a well-presented argument. A tactful beginning can gain the reader's attention while a reasonable approach is required to convince the audience that a request/project/proposal is worthy. A well-presented argument is essential to motivate the reader to act. A letter urging action may be organised, as shown in Figure 20.17, into

Letters urging action open with an attention-grabbing statement, spell out what needs to be done, and motivate the reader to act.

three parts:

Opening: Gains the reader's attention

Body: Details that build the reader's interest and reduces resistance

Closing: Motivates action

Opening	→	The letter should be opened with a brief statement that gains the reader's attention. It may be opened with a compliment, a question, a startling fact, a problem description, or a surprising statement. The purpose is to capture the attention of the reader.
Body	→	Related information should be given to build the interest of the reader and convince him/her that the request is reasonable. Direct and indirect reader benefits, specific details, statistics, and/or supporting examples may be included here.
Closing	→	The reader has to be motivated to act. The writer must be as specific as possible. The letter may be closed with a goodwill expression.

Fig. 20.17 A Letter Urging Action

The letter in Fig. 20.18 illustrates how the writer urges the audience to act:

SMART COUNSELLING SERVICES

C-26, Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi-110016

April 16, 2004

S K Chatterjee

HR Consultant

Allen Management Consultants, Noida

Dear Mr Chatterjee

Our organisation admires your consultancy's expertise in conducting training programmes in marketing management.

The success of your training programme in Export Management has revolutionised the very idea of corporate training. We are now, organising our XIIIth Training Programme on 'Export Marketing' from 24th – 28th May, 2004, at our office. I have been asked by the members of the Training Organising Committee to invite you to give a talk on "New Trends in Export Marketing". By sharing your experiences with a big audience of enthusiastic marketing professionals, you can provide a new dimension to the whole programme.

We will offer you a standard honorarium of Rs 5000 and the normal travelling expenses by air or train (AC I).

I am sending you the list of participants and other programme details. I am sure your presence will make the programme a great success. Please call me at 9835222281 by April 30 to give your approval so that we can make necessary arrangements.

Sincerely,

V S Sood

General Manager

Fig. 20.18 A Letter Urging Action

Progress Check 4

Analyse the following order letter, and revise it making it more direct and effective:

July 4, 2004

The Sales Manager
PCS Industries Ltd
113, Park Street
Flat 2C, Poddar Point,
Kolkata-16

Dear Sir,

We are opening a new branch of our company on July 10, 2004, and we would need six PCs for this branch. I was lucky to see your company's advertisement in the Times of India and was really impressed by your company's long IT experience, large service network, and effective after sales service. We are interested in your Orion Silver Magic PC model. This model has a Pentium 4 and Processor 2.0 GHs with 43.1 centimetre colour monitor, 128 MB DDR RAM, and 40 GB HDD with 7200 RPM. The catalogue number of this product is PC/21. It costs Rs 23,400. However, there is an extra charge of Rs 2500 for freight, delivery and installation. As mentioned above we are interested in six PCs. We would also pay the extra charge for freight, delivery, and installation. The total amount for six PCs will be Rs 1,55,400. So, we are sending you a crossed cheque for Rs 1,55,400 drawn on State Bank of India.

Please send us the above mentioned item as soon as possible.

Best regards,

Sincerely,

P K Chakavarthy

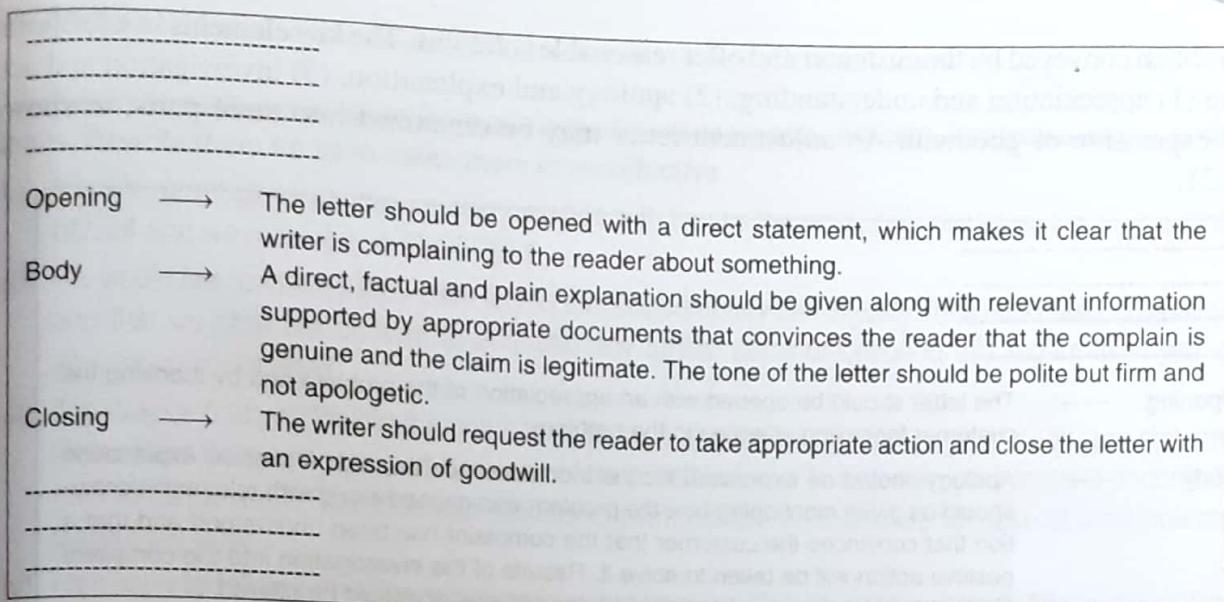
COMPLAINT AND ADJUSTMENT LETTERS

Complaint Letters

A complaint letter is an expression of dissatisfaction. The writer complains about something that went wrong, that is, a defective product, bad service, misbehaviour, mistaken billing, guarantee/warranty problems, and so on. As anger can spoil a business message, complaint letters should not vent anger. They should be logical and persuasive based on solid facts and not on personal opinions or emotions.

As the basic objective of every complaint letter is to motivate change, persuasive language has to be used. The key elements in a complaint letter are (1) mentioning the purpose of the letter, (2) explaining what happened, (3) convincing the reader that your complaint is genuine, and (4) motivating the reader to act. A letter of complaint may be organised into three parts, as shown in Figure 20.21.

Complaint letters open with a clear problem statement, support the complaint with data, and close with an expression of goodwill.

**Fig. 20.19 Complaint Letter**

The letter of complaint in Fig. 20.20 illustrates the organisation of ideas:

July 5, 2004
 The General Manager
 Dhanbad Telecom District
 Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd
 Dhanbad
 Dear Sir,
 I would like to point out a billing error in my May and July telephone bills.
 According to the May bill (see copy attached), I had to pay an arrear of Rs. 4391/-for January and March bills. As these bills were already paid in April 2004, I pointed out the error to the Accounts officer (TR), Dhanbad, and he assured me that the error would be corrected.
 However, in my July bill (copy attached), the same arrear has appeared again. Moreover, my telephone number 2203821 has been disconnected because your computer claims that I have not paid the telephone bills for more than three months.
 Please correct this error and instruct the concerned department to reconnect my telephone without any reconnection charge. I have enclosed the receipts for all the bills paid by me since April 2004. I appreciate your cooperation in this matter.
 Sincerely,
 Dulal Chakarvarthy
 14, Luby Circular Road
 Dhanbad-826004

Fig. 20.20 Complaint Letter

Adjustment letters open with an appreciation of the problem, explain the situation, promise positive action, and close with a statement of goodwill.

Adjustment Letters

An adjustment letter is an attempt to satisfy an aggrieved customer, who has the potential to damage the goodwill of the company in the market. In order to save the reputation of the company, the letter writer has to express clear understanding

of the problem conveyed by the customer and offer reasonable solutions. The key elements in an adjustment letter are (1) appreciation and understanding, (2) apology and explanation, (3) investigation and action, and (4) expression of goodwill. An adjustment letter may be organized into three parts, as shown in Fig. 20.21.

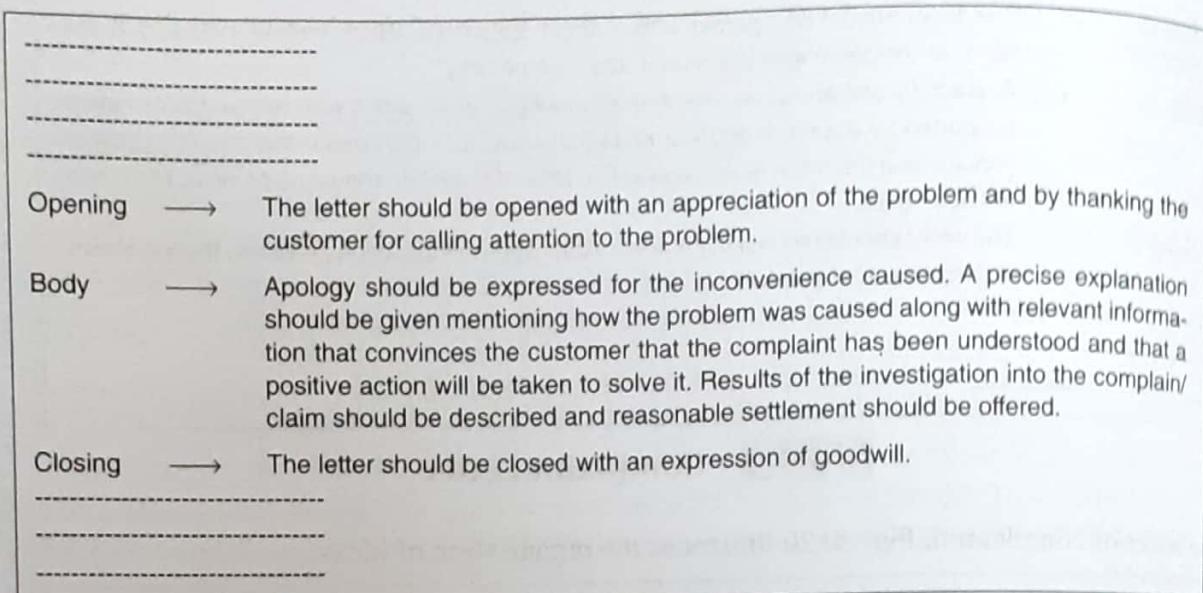


Fig. 20.21 Adjustment Letter

The following sample letter of complaint in Fig. 20.22 illustrates the organisation of ideas:

**BHARAT SANCHAR NIGAM LTD.
Dhanbad Telecom District**

July 12, 2004

Mr Dulal Chakarvarthy
14, Luby Circular Road
Dhanbad-826004

Dear Mr Chakarvarthy,

Thank you for your letter dated July 5 pointing out a billing error on your May and July telephone bills.

We are sorry for the inconvenience caused to you. I discussed the problem with our Accounts Officer, who informed me that our computer did not show your payment because you made the payment manually. As the list of manual payments reached the accounts department after the July bills had been finalised, your telephone was disconnected.

The errors have been corrected and you will receive the corrected bills within a week. In the meantime, your telephone line has been reconnected, and you do not have to pay any reconnection charge.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

General Manager
Dhanbad Telecom District
Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd
Dhanbad

Fig. 20.22 Adjustment Letter