

15. Letter Writing**THE SEVEN CS OF BUSINESS LETTER WRITING:**

Effective letter writing boils down to knowing why you are writing a letter, understanding your reader's needs and then clearly writing what you need to say. Every letter should be clear, human, helpful and as friendly as the topic allows. The best letters have a conversational tone and read as if you were talking to your reader. In brief then, discover the Seven-Cs of letter writing. You should be:

1. Clear
2. Concise
3. Correct
4. Courteous
5. Conversational
6. Convincing
7. Complete

When you write a letter, you are trying to convince someone to act or react in a positive way. Your reader will respond quickly only if your meaning is crystal clear.

Put yourself in the reader's shoes and write in a friendly and helpful tone. Don't represent your company as one that cannot make a mistake and must always be in the right. Try not to reply in the normal bland and defensive way write a sincere and helpful letter.

Show you are interested in the reader's circumstances. If he or she has mentioned something personal in the letter, refer to it in your reply. This builds a bridge between you and the reader. Read the original letter carefully and see if there is something you can put in your letter to show your interest.

Questions to guide your writing

- Who is my audience?
- What is my objective?
- What are the objectives and needs of my audience?
- How can I best express my objective in relationship to my audience's objectives and needs?
- What specific benefits can I offer to my audience and how can I best express them?

- What opening sentence and paragraph will grab the attention of my audience in a positive manner and invite them to read further?
- How can I maintain and heighten the interest and desire of the reader throughout the letter?
- What evidence can I present of my value to my audience?
- If a resume is enclosed with the letter, how can I best make the letter advertise the resume?
- What closing sentence or paragraph will best assure the reader of my capabilities and persuade him or her to contact me for further information?
- Is the letter my best professional effort?
- Have I spent sufficient time drafting, revising, and proof-reading the letter?

GUIDE TO BASIC BUSINESS LETTERS:

The Basics

The basics of good business letter writing are easy to learn. The following guide provides the phrases that are usually found in any standard business letter. For more detailed help with standard business writing skills, I highly recommend these business English books. By using these standard phrases, you can give a professional tone to your English business letters. These phrases are used as a kind of frame and introduction to the content of business letters. At the end of this guide, you will find links to sites that give tips on the difficult part of writing successful business letters -arguing your business objective.

The Start

Examples:

- Dear Personnel Director,
- Dear Sir or Madam (use if you don't know who you are writing to)
- Dear Mr, Mrs, Miss or Ms (use if you know who you are writing to, and have a formal relationship with -VERY IMPORTANT use Ms for women unless asked to use Mrs or Miss)
- Dear Frank (use if the person is a close business contact or friend)

The Reason for Writing

If you start afresh, you use following phrases:

Examples:

I am writing to:

- enquire about...
- apologize for...
- confirm...

References

When you are in the middle, you use following reference phrases:

Examples:

With reference to:

- your advertisement in the Times,
- your letter dated of 23rd March,
- your phone call today,
- your letter dated of March 5th.

Requesting**Examples:**

- Could you possibly?
- I would be grateful if you could

Agreeing to Requests**Examples:**

- I would be delighted to

Giving Bad News**Examples:**

- Unfortunately
- I am afraid that

Enclosing Documents**Examples:**

- I am enclosing
- Please find enclosed
- Enclosed you will find

Closing Remarks**Examples:**

- Thank you for your help.
- Please contact us in case you require further assistance.
- Write to me if there are any problems.
- Let me know if you have any questions.

Reference to Future Contact**Examples:**

I look forward to:

- hearing from you soon.
- meeting you next Tuesday.
- seeing you next Thursday.

The Finish**Examples:**

- Yours faithfully, (If you don't know the name of the person you're writing to)
- Yours sincerely, (If you know the name of the person you're writing to)
- Best wishes
- Best regards (If the person is a close business contact or friend)

PARTS OF A BUSINESS LETTER:**Date**

The date line is used to indicate the date the letter was written. However, if your letter is completed over a number of days, use the date it was finished in the date line. When writing to companies within the United States, use the American date format. For example: June 11, 2001) Write out the month, day and year two inches from the top of the page. Depending on which format you are using for your letter, either left align the date or center it horizontally.

Sender's Address

Including the address of the sender is optional. If you choose to include it, place the address one line below the date. Do not write the sender's name or title, as it is included in the letter's closing. Include only the street address, city and zip code. Another option is to include the sender's address directly after the closing signature.

Inside Address

The inside address is the recipient's address. It is always best to write to a specific individual at the firm to which you are writing. If you do not have the person's name, do some research by calling the company or speaking with employees from the company. Include a personal title such as Ms., Mrs., Mr., or Dr. Follow a woman's preference in being addressed as Miss, Mrs., or Ms. If you are unsure of a woman's preference in being addressed, use Ms. If the person to whom you are writing is a Dr. or has some other title, use that title. For international addresses, type the name of the country in all-capital letters on the last line. The inside address begins one line below the sender's address or one inch below the date. It should be left justified, no matter which format you are using.

Salutation

Use the same name as the inside address, including the personal title. If you know the person and typically address them by their first name, it is acceptable to use only the first name in the salutation (i.e., Dear Lucy :). In all other cases, however, use the personal title and full name followed by a colon. Leave one line blank after the salutation.

If you don't know a reader's gender, use a non-sexist salutation, such as "To Whom it May Concern." It is also acceptable to use the full name in a salutation if you cannot determine gender. For example, you might write 'Dear Chris Harmon:' if you were unsure of Chris's gender.

Body

In the first paragraph, consider a friendly opening and then a statement of the main point. The next paragraph should begin justifying the importance of the main point. In the next few paragraphs, continue justification with background information and supporting details. The closing paragraph should restate the purpose of the letter and, in some cases, request some type of action.

Closing

The closing begins at the same horizontal point as your date and one line after the last body paragraph. Capitalize the first word only (i.e., Thank you) and leave four lines between the closing and the sender's name for a signature. If a colon follows the salutation, a comma should follow the closing; otherwise, there is no punctuation after the closing.

Enclosures

If you have enclosed any documents along with the letter; such as a resume, you indicate this simply by typing Enclosures one line below the closing. As an option, you may list the name of each document you are including in the envelope. For instance, if you have included many documents and need to insure that the recipient is aware of each document, it may be a good idea to list the names.

A note about format and font

When writing business letters, you must pay special attention to the format and font used.

Block Format: The most common layout of a business letter is known as block format. Using this format, the entire letter is left justified and single spaced except for a double space between paragraphs.

Example:

March 16, 2001

Ernie English
1234 Writing Lab Lane
Write City, IN 12345

Dear Mr. English:

The first paragraph of a typical business letter is used to state the main point of the letter. Begin with a friendly opening; then quickly transition into the purpose of your letter. Use a couple of sentences to explain the purpose, but do not go in to detail until the next paragraph.

Beginning with the second paragraph, state the supporting details to justify your purpose. These may take the form of background information, statistics or first-hand accounts. A few short paragraphs within the body of the letter should be enough to support your reasoning.

Finally, in the closing paragraph, briefly restate your purpose and why it is important. If the purpose of your letter is employment related, consider ending your letter with your

contact information. However, if the purpose is informational, think about closing with gratitude for the reader's time.

Sincerely,

Lucy Letter
123 Winner's Road
New Employee Town, PA 12345

Modified Block Format: Another widely utilized format is known as modified block format. In this type, the body of the letter is left justified and single-spaced. However, the date and closing are in alignment in the center of the page.

Example:

March 16, 2001

Ernie English
1234 Writing Lab Lane
Write City, IN 12345

Dear Mr. English:

The first paragraph of a typical business letter is used to state the main point of the letter. Begin with a friendly opening; then quickly transition into the purpose of your letter. Use a couple of sentences to explain the purpose, but do not go in to detail until the next paragraph.

Beginning with the second paragraph, state the supporting details to justify your purpose. These may take the form of background information, statistics or first-hand accounts. A few short paragraphs within the body of the letter should be enough to support your reasoning.

Finally, in the closing paragraph, briefly restate your purpose and why it is important. If the purpose of your letter is employment related, consider ending your letter with your contact information. However, if the purpose is informational, think about closing with gratitude for the reader's time.

Sincerely,

Lucy Letter

Semi-Modified Block Format: The final, and least used, style is semi-block. It is much like the modified block style except that each paragraph is indented instead of left justified.

Example:

March 16, 2001

Ernie English
1234 Writing Lab Lane
Write City, IN 12345

Dear Mr. English:

The first paragraph of a typical business letter is used to state the main point of the letter. Begin with a friendly opening; then, quickly transition into the purpose of your letter. Use a couple of sentences to explain the purpose, but do not go in to detail until the next paragraph.

Beginning with the second paragraph, state the supporting details to justify your purpose. These may take the form of background information, statistics or first-hand accounts. A few short paragraphs within the body of the letter should be enough to support your reasoning.

Finally, in the closing paragraph, briefly restate your purpose and why it is

important. If the purpose of your letter is employment related; consider ending your letter with your contact information. However, if the purpose is informational, think about closing with gratitude for the reader's time.

Sincerely,

Lucy Letter

Another important factor in the readability of a letter is the chosen font. **The generally accepted font is Times New Roman, size 12, although other fonts such as Arial may be used.** When choosing a font, always **consider your audience.** If you are writing to a conservative company, you may want to use Times New Roman. However, if you are writing to a more liberal company, you have a little more freedom when choosing fonts.

As far as punctuation after the salutation and closing is concerned, the standard is to use a colon after the salutation (never a comma) and a comma after the closing. There is also a less accepted format, known as open punctuation, in which punctuation is excluded after the salutation and the closing.

Practice:

1. Write a letter to your Bank Manager complaining about the rude treatment given to you by Deputy Manager when you requested him for allotting a locker to you.
2. Write a letter to the Head Office of your Bank praising the quality of service rendered by you branch since your opening a current account for your business with them about six months ago.
3. Write a letter to your elder brother from the town in which you have just joined a new appointment describing the interesting features of the town, of the people with whom you are associated and of the work you are required to do.
4. Write a letter as Manager of a Bank to a leading limited company dealing in construction business requesting them to open their current account with your Bank. Explain the nature of service you will be able to render to attract their account.
5. You are Branch Manager of a Bank. Write a letter to Head office recommending installation of ATMs in your Office premises and also in the Extension counter in an Engineering college. Elaborate the progress your branch will be making on account of

this move.

6. You are the Chairman of local Business Establishments Committee. Write a letter to the Manager of local Bank branch requesting that banks' working hours should be increased by one hour in the evening to facilitate depositing of cash by your members into their account. Give additional reasons justifying your request.
7. Your friend has been attending bank interviews for the last two years. He did not get selected in his fourth interview for which results were announced recently. He is feeling dejected. Write a letter to him in 150 words suggesting that if he prepares well for the future exams he will succeed.

