



COMMUNICATION SKILLS II (ENGL 158) DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

FORMAL LETTERS

**STRUCTURE, FEATURES, LANGUAGE &
STYLE**



FORMAL LETTER (Intro)

- A formal letter is a written form of communication for official or business purposes.
- Formal letters are those that concern work or employment or those that are written to/by people who hold some offices or positions.



FORMAL LETTER (Intro) cont'd

Examples of such letters include:

- Letters of application for employment
- Letters to the press (editors, newspapers etc.)
- Letters to government offices, businesses, organizations
- Query letters
- Dismissal letters
- Appointment letters



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Features of Formal letters

The various parts of a formal letter are:

- Writer's Address
- Date
- Recipient's Address
- Salutation
- Heading
- Content/Body (Introduction, Main body, Conclusion)
- Subscription



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Writer's Address (WA)

- The WA is the details of the place that the writer lives or works.
- This must be written without the name of the writer (the subscription captures that)
- The WA has two components:
 1. The Institution and mail element
 2. The Location Element



Writer's Address (WA) cont'd

The Institution and Mail Element

- This contains the name of the institution and the mail address which may be a Post Office Box, Private Mail Bag or a Block and Street Name.

Eg. Hour of Grace School

P. O. Box UP90

KNUST

Kumasi

Hour of Grace School

4 Jackson Street (GPS Location)

Ayeduase

Kumasi



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Writer's Address (WA) cont'd

- In the case where the writer has no address of the kind shown above, the “Care of” (C/o) address can be used:

Eg. C/o Mr. Kojo Botsio
Hour of Grace School
P. O. Box UP90
KNUST
Kumasi

- In the case of reply, the letter will be sent to the stated address and received by Mr. Botsio.



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Writer's Address (WA) cont'd

The Location Element

- It may include the suburb, town or city, region or province and country.

Eg. Plot 47 Block 5

4 Jackson Street (GPS Location)

Ayeduase

Kumasi

Ghana



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Writer's Address (WA) cont'd

WA Formats

- **Letterhead:** It has the organizational logo or emblem as well as the address details of the organization or institution.
- It is generally designed at the apex of a plain paper.
- A letterhead is seen as the sole property of an organization.
- **Written:** The writer types/writes his/her address with all details as discussed above.



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Writer's Address (WA) cont'd

Position of the WA

- “Top-right corner” of the sheet/screen: The details of the WA discussed above are written or typed at the said position.

NB: When the WA is written at this end, the subscription must also be written at the “**down-right**” corner of the sheet/screen after the conclusion of the main body.



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Writer's Address (WA) cont'd

Position of the WA

- **“Top-left corner” of the sheet/screen:** The details of the WA discussed above are written or typed at the said position.

NB: When the WA is written at this end, the subscription must also be written at the **“down-left”** corner of the sheet/screen after the conclusion of the main body.



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Writer's Address (WA) cont'd

WA at Top-right corner

Writer's Address

Date

Recipient's Address

Salutation

Heading/Topic/Title

Body of the letter(Introduction, Main body, and conclusion)

Subscription



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Writer's Address (WA) cont'd

WA at Top-left corner

Writer's Address

Date

Recipient's Address

Salutation

Heading/Topic/Title

Body of the letter(Introduction, Main body, and conclusion)

Subscription



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Date

- This states the day, month and year in which the letter is written.
- It is a separate element from the address.

Eg.

10th November, 2020
November 10, 2020



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Recipient's Address

- This states the person to whom the letter is written.
- This has three parts:
 1. Recipient's name or designation
 2. Institution's name
 3. Location



Recipient's Address cont'd

Recipient's name or designation

- This specifies the name or the designation of the person to whom the letter is written.
- In using the name, the title (Mr., Mrs., Prof., Dr., Miss etc) and full name must be used.
- Letters that carry personal names are considered to be for the exclusive interest of the person addressed.

Eg. Mr. Kojo Botsio



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Recipient's Address cont'd

Recipient's name or designation cont'd

- Letters that carry the designation of the individual is deemed the property of the institution. They can be opened by the Secretary.

Eg. The Chief Administrative Officer

- Sometimes, the designation is added in parenthesis to the personal name.
- This implies that though the letter is personal, it is associated with the recipient's position.

Eg. Mr. Kojo Botsio

(The Chief Administrative Officer)



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Recipient's Address cont'd

The Institution's name

- This states the name of the institution of the recipient.

Eg. The Chief Administrative Officer
Hour of Grace School

The Location of the institution

- This may not be necessary in the main letter as it is mandatory in addressing the back of an envelope for a recipient.

Eg. The Chief Administrative Officer
Hour of Grace School
4 Jackson Street, Ayeduase - Kumasi



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Recipient's Address cont'd

For the purpose of distribution, the concept of recipient address is broadened into:

- **Direct Recipient:** This is the person to whom the letter is specifically written to (as explained above).
- **Copy Recipient:** This is the person who the writer **thinks must be informed about the content of the letter**. It is written with the caption, CC (Courtesy Copy/Carbon Copy) at the **close of the letter**.

Eg. CC: The Human Resource Manager
The Finance Officer



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Recipient's Address cont'd

- **'Attention' Recipient:** The attention recipient is expected to carry out some duties related to the content of a letter. This is written with 'Attention' or 'Attn' and found at the close of the letter.
Eg. **Attn:** The Human Resource Manager
- **'Through' Recipient:** 'Through' recipient: This is the official who serves as a transit for a letter to get to its direct recipient. They play important roles in the action that is to be taken from the letter. This is written at the position of the recipient address.



Recipient's Address cont'd

Eg. 'Through' Recipient:

The Vice Chancellor
KNUST

Through:

The Provost
College of Arts and Humanities
KNUST

Through:

The Dean
Faculty of Social Sciences
KNUST

Through:

The Head
Department of English
KNUST



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Salutation

- This is a form of greeting or call to the recipient for his/her attention
- The salutation must show politeness. Some accepted forms are:
 1. Dear Sir (when the recipient is a male)
 2. Dear Madam (when the recipient is a female)
 3. Dear Sir/Madam (when the recipient is not known
- avoid this if possible)
- The designation of the recipient can be used in the salutation. For example: Dear Supervisor, Dear Tutor, Dear Principal
- The salutation is written below the recipient address with a mandatory comma (Dear Sir,)



Heading

- This captures the purpose of a letter.
- It must not be written in a sentence form therefore, it must not be punctuated (i.e. end with a full stop).

Eg: Offer of Appointment

- The name of the writer or any information that identifies the writer must not be written in this section.
- When the letter is being written in response to a letter received earlier, the heading of the previous letter should be copied with the prefix 'Re:'.

For example,

Re: Offer of Appointment



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Content/Body

- This is partitioned into:
 1. Introduction
 2. Main body
 3. Conclusion

Introduction:

- It gives a gist of the subject matter of the letter.
- It must be noted that the formal letter is written mainly for official or business purposes hence, officials do not have the time for 'unnecessary' pleasantries.

Eg. of Introduction:

I respectfully write to your high office to apply for the position of Teaching Assistant.



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Content/Body cont'd

Main Body:

- The main body gives details of the subject matter introduced in the introduction.
- For example, in an application for employment letter, the writer must in this section, convince the recipient to be awarded the job.
- The writer can concisely write about his/her education, experience, professional skills etc.
- Normally, application letters are submitted with CVs as attachments therefore, elaborate details must be omitted in this part.
- The idea of salience or 'what is important' must be utilized in the writing of the main body.



Content/Body cont'd

Conclusion:

- This is as important as the introduction and main body.
- In application letters of employment, one can end with:
 1. **Statement of Hope:** This is where the individual ends with a statement which shows his/her hope to be offered the appointment.
Eg. I humbly hope that my application is considered.
 2. **Statement of Attachment:** This is written when supporting documents are attached to the letter.
Eg. Attached to this letter are all supporting documents to my application.



Subscription

- This closes the letter and identifies the writer.
- This has four (4) parts:
 1. Complimentary close/closing
 2. Signature
 3. Name
 4. Designation and identification

Complimentary Close/ Closing

- End the letter with 'Yours faithfully,' especially in job application letters.
- 'Yours sincerely' is used when there is some sort of **rapport** between the writer and the recipient. It can also be used when the name of recipient is written at the recipient address section.



Subscription cont'd

Complimentary Close/ Closing Cont'd

- Mandatorily, the initial letter of 'Yours' must be 'capitalized' whilst the following adverb, for example 'faithfully', must start with a small letter.
- 'Yours' should be used when an adverb (mainly words ending in '-ly') is used in the closing.
- In cases where an adverb is not used, 'Your' can be applied.
- For example, Your Trustee



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Subscription cont'd

Signature

- To curb issues of impersonation and for the authenticity of the letter, the writer must append his/her signature.
- There can also be an individual who bears the same name. The signature is therefore important in identifying the writer. This is a legal symbol for an individual.

Name

- The name of the writer is written after the signature.
- The name can be followed by one's social or academic title or credentials.
- For example, Ama Sarpong (Mrs.) or Ama Sarpong (PhD)



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Subscription cont'd

Designation and Identification

- This is written after the name of the writer. It may be any information that seeks to further identify the writer.

- For example:

Adwoa Antwi Bosiako
(Purchasing Clerk)

Or

Adwoa Antwi Bosiako
(Student Number: 20522070)



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Language and Style

- The language should be precise and should have an unflinching preoccupation with the subject and focus of the interaction.
- There should be a high degree of politeness
- There should be strictness of form. Nothing should be taken for granted.
- As much as possible, things are supposed to be stated in their full form. Do not use contracted forms of words.



Language and Style cont'd

- Never use sentences like: “bye for now” or participial phrases such as “Thanking you in advance”, “Hoping to hear soon from you etc.
- Do not ‘beg’ or sound very religious in your business or application letter. Use words such as plead or implore instead of “beg”.
- Avoid artificial elegance. The tendency is for writers to use language in order to merely create artistic beauty.
- It is important to remember that strict adherence to object of communication, and precision of communication are features of the language and style of the formal letter.



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Reading Assignment

Please read on the Principle of Formality from Sekyi-Baidoo (2003: 186) **or any other source** and make your own notes



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Assignment

You have seen a Call for Applications on various vacant positions at a firm or institution. Write a letter to the Managing Director to apply for your prospective position.



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Works Consulted

Adolinama, P. P. (2005). *Communication Skills for University Students*. Accra: ANEST Company Limited

Sekyi-Baidoo, Y. (2003). *Learning and communicating (Second Edition)*. Accra: Infinity Graphics Ltd.



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