

Letter Writing

A letter is a written message that can be handwritten or printed on paper. It is usually sent to the recipient via mail or post in an envelope, although this is not a requirement as such. Any such message that is transferred via post is a letter, a written conversation between two parties.

Now that E-mails and texts and other such forms have become the norm for communication, the art of letter writing has taken a backseat. However, even today a lot of our communication, especially the formal kind, is done via letters. Whether it is a cover letter for a job, or the bank sending you a reminder or a college acceptance letter, letters are still an important mode of communication.

Types of Letters

There are broadly two types of letter, namely Formal Letters, and Informal Letters. But then there are also a few types of letters based on their contents, formalities, the purpose of letter writing etc. Let us have a look at the few types of letters.

- **Formal Letter:** These letters follow a certain pattern and formality. They are strictly kept professional in nature, and directly address the issues concerned. Any type of business letter or letter to authorities falls within this given category.
- **Informal Letter:** These are personal letters. They need not follow any set pattern or adhere to any formalities. They contain personal information or are a written conversation. Informal letters are generally written to friends, acquaintances, relatives etc.
- **Business Letter:** This letter is written among business correspondents, generally contains commercial information such as quotations, orders, complaints, claims, letters for collections etc. Such letters are always strictly formal and follow a structure and pattern of formalities.
- **Official Letter:** This type of letter is written to inform offices, branches, subordinates of official information. It usually relays official information like rules, regulations, procedures, events, or any other such information. Official letters are also formal in nature and follow certain structure and decorum.
- **Social Letter:** A personal letter written on the occasion of a special event is known as a social letter. Congratulatory letter, condolence letter, invitation letter etc. are all social letters.
- **Circular Letter:** A letter that announces information to a large number of people is a circular letter. The same letter is circulated to a large group of people to correspond some important information like a change of address, change in management, the retirement of a partner etc.
- **Employment Letters:** Any letters with respect to the employment process, like joining letter, promotion letter, application letter etc.

Importance/Need of letter writing:

1. Business letters serve as a representative of the organization.
2. It provides information on topics related to business.
3. Business letters provide valuable evidence for a transaction and thus provide a legal purpose.
4. Business letters become a reference material for future transactions between organizations and individuals.
5. Business letters encourage and sustain goodwill.
6. Business letters inspire all the people involved in the business to perform higher and better level performance.

Functions of a Business Letter:

1. **Convey Information:** The basic purpose of any business letter is to convey information regarding business activities. Information can be transmitted through business letter to customers, suppliers, debtors, government authorities, financial institutions, bank and insurance companies and to any other parties related with the business.
2. **Conclude transaction:** This is one of the basic purposes of business letter. To conclude in completed transactions business letters are frequently used.
3. **Creation of demand:** Business letters especially circular letters used to create demand for new products. Circular letters can communicate many people at the same time.
4. **Creation of Goodwill:** In this electronic era messages can be sent within few seconds through electronic media but a well decorated business letter has its own importance in creating positive image of the company.
5. **Expansion of business:** Through goodwill messages and circular letters existing market can be expanded.
6. **Establishment of Relationship:** It helps to develop mutual relationship with the customers, suppliers, and with other interested parties.
7. **Evidence:** Business letters are also used to maintain documentary evidence. Letters can be preserved for future reference.
8. **To Enquire:** A business concern not only sends messages but also receive information from the outside
9. **Placing order:** It is a very common purpose for using business letter. Both trading and manufacturing concerns need to place orders for finished goods or raw:- materials to run the business.
10. **Problem Solving:** In the course of business, disputes and misunderstanding may arise. Business letters play vital role in playing such misunderstandings.

Essentials of Business Letter:

A business letter is an important form of written communication. Following points can explain

importance of business letters:

1. **Promptness:** as a communication rule, respond to the letter on the same day it is received. Writer should acknowledge the letter & indicate how soon specific reply will be sent.
2. **Knowledge of the subject:** it indicates that the writer of the letter should have knowledge of past correspondence regarding the subject on which he is writing a letter, if any. The writer also aware about requirement of the sender of the letter & the knowledge of the firm's business policies.

3. **Appropriateness:** it indicates that, the writer should change his tone & language of letter according to the need of occasion as well as psychology of the reader.
4. **Accuracy, completeness & clarity:** it indicates that, the writer should mention all facts, figures, statements, quotations etc. accurately. It is a good practice to verify them before being a part of your business letter. If you are replying to the enquiry, make sure that you have touched all the points. Every message should be absolutely clear & unambiguous. So that it accomplishes the purpose for which it is being sent. Writer should ensure that he has avoided all the pitfalls like faulty punctuations, faulty arrangement of words or omission of words.
5. **Courtesy:** it implies that we seek favors politely & express our gratitude in favor of readers. The general tone of letter should be mild & there should be feeling for reader. Even failure to given reply is an act of discourtesy. So the writer should punctual about reply of the letter. Courtesy gives better result & can win the confidence of the receiver about organization.
6. **Tact:** one should be very tactful while writing letters. It is a quality that goes hand in hand with courtesy. The writer should handle complaints and make their adjustments by using tactful language. The essence of tactfulness lies in retaining the goodwill of organization & writer.
7. **Persuasion:** it means winning confidence of people and people to your point of view, not by coercing them but making them positive suggestions and explaining advantages of it. It also includes ensuring them about advantages if they follow our suggestions.
8. **Conciseness:** conciseness means applying principle of brevity while writing a letter. Brevity means express in short about issue. The business letter should be concise in the latest possible number of words. Don't load your letter with irrelevant details & unnecessary information which can consume valuable time of reader. Also writer should keep in mind that such kind of letters can be neglected by readers & it may be harmful for success of business.
9. **Style:** the physical appearance of business letter should express writer's personality. It includes clear & concise writing; point writing and arrangement of facts should be in the best possible order.

10. Approach: the approach of the writer towards writing letter should be positive & pleasant. The writer should avoid words like „no & „sorry“. Instead of saying „no“ he should use „another time“ and „I will try my best“ in place of sorry.

11. ‘You Attitude’ in Business letter:

It implies that, in all type of communications, the emphasis should be given on „you“ instead of „I“. In other words it is recommended that the writer should avoid using words like „I“ & „we“ and use more „you“. Most of the letter fails because they do not realize the importance of “you attitude”; which helps to appreciate reader & would be prompt to take quick & immediate positive action regarding subject of the letter.

While selling any product, seller should highlight qualities of the product & how this product is beneficial to the perspective customer. Mostly while writing sales letters, collection letters, you attitude should be adopted for satisfactory turnover & collection of credit. While writing letter for job application writer should explain how his service will be benefited to the concern party.

Physical appearance of Business letter

The business letter should create favorable impression on the mind of recipient & make addition to the goodwill of the business. So, good business letter is treated

as an asset of every business organization. The physical appearance of a letter is important to become a good business letter. So, it should be attractive, impressive & helpful to influence to the person, who is recipient of the same. Following figure shows the factors which determine physical appearance of business letter:

1. **Paper:** while writing business letter, every writer should use standard quality paper with appropriate type & suitable for nature & type of business. Poor quality paper is cheap, but it creates poor opinion of the letter in the mind of reader. Mostly, for writing a business letter, first page should be always a letter head, which should create good impression due to attractiveness & decent nature. In addition to this different paper may be used to identify different writers & departments from where letter is delivered. Mostly the A-4 size paper is used for writing any type of business letter. But the size of paper is different for some specific countries, which are as under-

For USA

[8.5" X 11"] is standard size and

[5.5" X 8.5"] for short communication.

For UK

[8" X 10"] is standard size and

[5" X 8"] for short communication.

In India, above both sized papers are used for writing letters.

2. **Typing:** Hand written letters has now become an old fashion. In today's dynamic business era, most of the business letters are typed on typewriter or composed on processors, popularly known as microcomputer. The typewriter used for typing must be electronic typewriter with good quality. Use of computer is more beneficial than electronic typewriter because writer can type words as well as use visuals like graphs, tables, diagrams and many more advanced features with the use of computer. It also facilitates multiple copies of same letter and saved it for long period and can be retrieved as and when required.
3. **Folding:** after typing of the letter, writer has to fold it to insert in envelope. It should be folded in a manner that it fits comfortably in the envelope. There should be minimum folds to letter (not more than two or three). If envelop used is a window envelope, a care should be taken to see that the inside address faces the transparent part of the envelope.
4. **Margin:** to make a letter more attractive & representative, there should be sufficient wide margin for all the sides of letter. There should be 12 to 15 spaces from left hand side and 5 to 8 spaces at right hand side. Sufficient space should be left at the top and bottom also. The left side space may be used by receiver to make important remark on the issue discussed in letter. Sufficient space avoids torn or mutilation of important subject matter mentioned in letter while filing it.
5. **Paragraphs:** if the letter is short, then it is not necessary to make paragraphs. But if data typed is large & important to mention, then writer has to divide this data in suitable numbers of paragraphs. So, sufficient numbers of paragraphs make it suitable to discuss more subjects independently in same letter. Reader can also read and digest subject matter easily.
6. **Envelope:** after carefully folding the letter it should be inserting in envelope for delivery. Envelope plays an important role to create impression upon the receiver. It should be thick, impressive & attractive. The size, quality & color of

the envelope should be commensurate with the paper of letter. Low quality and odd color letter may create bad impression on the mind of receiver. Even letter is valuable & high quality. Mostly, brown, white or pink colored envelopes should be preferred. The name & full address of the receiver should be properly typed on the same. Similarly the mode of sending of the letter may be written on the envelope i.e. local, inland, outland/airmail, registered A.D. etc.

7. **Stamp:** after writing of the address of receiver on the envelope, the letter is ready for delivery but delivery is not possible till the charges of delivery is to be paid to postal or courier authority. These charges are popularly known as postal stamp. These charges are depends upon weight of letter and mode of sending i.e. local, simple, or registered or speed post. If the proper stamp is not affixed on the letter as per the standard, there may be delay in service or letter may be returned for concern authority with least possible penalty on the sender. If it is delivering to receiver, then penalty will be charged on him.

Business letter is a silent Ambassador of Goodwill:

A good business letter is a medium for communication between two or more persons. Every letter delivered from business organization, carries a message& helps to build reputation of the firm after reading it by receiver. The reader should feel that he is directly communicating to the writer. The letter should deliver the feeling of friendliness about the reader. A good business letter should make able to the reader to see the varied faces of the personality of the letter writer.

The letter writer should keep in mind that readers are human beings with feelings and reactions of normal people. So he should develop healthy public relations and create business goodwill through a multitude of human contacts. In short, any business letter should be able to bring two human beings closer together & helps to remove the feeling of bitterness.

While adjusting complaints of customers, the writer should be remembering that, “the customer is always right”. This attitude helps to remove misunderstanding between sender & receiver of complaints & satisfy the customers irrespective of the fault of any side. It is better opportunity for letter writer to explain his case &

present the fact in a frank manner and convert bitterness in to sweet smile. Such attitude of letter helps to save lot of time & less possibility of losing the customer's reputations. In short, while writing adjustment letters, customer's point of view should be taken into consideration.

After considering all above facts, we can say that every business should be a messenger of goodwill or traveler of the firm or a silent ambassador of goodwill.

LAYOUT OF BUSINESS LETTER

A business letter should have a layout that impresses. It is said that first impression is the last impression. It may be said that appearance are deceptive, but in daily affairs. Everyone is attracted by a good, presentable appearance. The impression created by the personality is undoubtedly important in a world, where there is a competition.

Like a sales personnel, business letter represents his firm/organization. If a poorly dressed, having unshaven, shabbily combed, unpolished shoes & having no idea of etiquettes, sales person will creates poor impression about firm. Same way, an unpleasant appearance of a letter fails to put impression on reader. So letter should pay attention on its layout.

Every business organization can choose their own layout, but the differences in a layout are not as many as their similarities. The following are common to all layouts. Their differences occur due to the typing or printing, conventions, spacing etc.

Common parts or elements or contents of Business letters:

Heading.	Main body of the letter.
Date.	Complimentary close.
Reference.	. Signature.
Inside address.	. Identification mark.
Attention line.	. Enclosure.
Salutation.	. Post script
Subject.	. Courtesy copy or CC

1. Heading: most of the organizations are using printed letterhead for correspondence. The letter head contains the name, the address, telephone number and the telegraphic address, if any. It is usual to provide the following information in the heading:

- a. Name of the firm.**
- b. Address of the firm.**
- c. Nature of the business.**
- d. Symbol & trademark.**
- e. Telephone number.**
- f. Telex number.**
- g. Fax number.**
- h. Email address.**
- i. WWW URL etc.**

Many firms prefer to put much of this information at the bottom of letterhead, where we may call it letter foot. The example of heading is shown below:

Logo or Trade mark	BAJAJ AUTO FINANCE, (PVT.) LTD. Pune-Mumbai Highway, Aakurdi, Pune-411 027. Tel.: , Fax: Telex: , Email: Web:
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2. Date: putting the date on every letter is very important. It enables quick reference in figures & helps in prompt action and orderly filing. It consists of day, month & year. It is written exact below the address of the heading. It is typed wither starting close from the left margin or ending closed to the right margin, depending upon style adopted.

The date on the letter may be written by in one of the following three ways:

- i. 14th Feb. 2020.
- ii. 14 Feb. 2020.
- iii. Feb. 14, 2020.

While writing date, one should avoid the following style of writing date:

14/2/2020 or 14-2-2020 or Feb. 14th, 2020 or 14 Feb., 2020

3. **Reference:** the reference is printed either below the date line. if the date written close to the left margin or on the same line in which date is written near the right margin. It serves to identify either the department or its section from which the correspondence is to be found. The purpose of reference is to be is to enables replies to be linked with the previous correspondence and also send relies to these letters to the proper official.

Following are the usual forms of reference:

1. Your reference no. PD/BAFL/243/ --.
2. Your ref. no. PD/BAFL/196/ ----- --.
4. **Inside address:** it contains name & address of the organization or the individual to whom letter is being sent. It should be written below the reference line, leaving some space. It should be complete, and can be written in either of two ways as shown below:

e.g. Bajaj Auto Finance Ltd.,
Pune-Mumbai highway,
Aakurdi, Pimpri-chinchwad,
Pune, Maharashtra.

Note: pin code is not applicable to inside address.

or

e.g. Bajaj Auto Finance Ltd.,
Pune-Mumbai highway,
Aakurdi, Pimpri-chinchwad,
Pune, Maharashtra.

There are different types of modes of addressing, which are given as below:

When the letter is being sent to an individual, writer has to sure about prefixing of the addressee.

- a. „Mr.“ or „Shri.“ is for addressing man whether one is married or unmarried.
- b. Only „Miss“ is used for unmarried woman.

- c. „Mrs.“ or „Shrimati“ is used for married woman.
- d. „Ms“ is used for a woman whose marital status is unknown.
- e. „Messer’s“ or „M/s“ is a plural and used while addressing a partnership firm.
e.g. M/s. Sultan Chand & Sons.
- f. Titles or rank such as Doctors, Professor, Reverend etc are used as follows:

Prof. Gorakhnath Mane, Dr. Ganesh Jagtap, Rev. Y.R. Martin, Col.V.G. More,
Padmashri Shridevi.

5. **Attention line:** the attention line is drawn, to draw attention of a particular person, officer or department. Generally it is written right hand side of the letter head & underlined. So, the letter will reach to the right person. There is no punctuation, but it is necessary to leave some space between the words. The following is the example of attention line.

Bajaj Auto Finance Ltd.,
Pune-Mumbai highway,
Akurdi, Pimpri-chinchwad,
Pune, Maharashtra.

For the attention of Mr. A.Y. Kokamthankar **or**
Attention: Assistant Finance manager.

6. **Salutation:** It is the greeting of the addressee. Writer may choose the salutation on the basis of his familiarity with the reader and the formality of the situation. The commonly used salutations are given below:
 - a. **Dear sir/madam:** When addressing to single person (whether married or not) , for ordinary business purpose.
 - b. **Dear sirs/ madams:** for addressing two or more persons.
 - c. **Dear mr/shri/mrs.:** when writing letter to an officer by name.
 - d. **Your Excellency:** when addressing the foreign ambassador or high court commissioner.

- e. Gentleman: when circular is to be too many addressees including individual, firm, society, company etc. but now a day's Dear sir/madam is also freely used in circulars.

While writing salutation, it is customary to end the salutation with a comma.

- 7. **Subject:** Many writers use subject lines to enable the reader to quickly identify the subject or correspondence. It tells what the correspondence is about. In addition, it contains any specific identifying material that is supposed to be helpful to know about letter before reading. It is placed below the line of salutation & begins with left margin, although it may be placed in the centre or intended. Sometimes, it includes reference of previous correspondence, order number or invoice number etc. following are the different forms of writing subject:

e.g. Subject: Enquiry about.....

Reference: your letter dated on.....

Sub: Enquiry about car loan facilities for.....

Ref: Your letter on dated... etc.

About your: Order number.....

In reply, please refer to file.....

- 8. **Main body of the letter:** the main purpose of a letter is to convey a message & produce suitable response in the reader from this message. This is mainly done through the body of the letter. Therefore, it is important to organize & arrange the material very carefully. Usually the body of the letter is divided into three parts:

- i. Opening or first paragraph.
- ii. Main or second paragraph.
- iii. Closing or concluding paragraph.

In the first paragraph, reference to any correspondence which has already taken place should be given. It is helpful to draw attention of the reader, in brief.

In second paragraph, the main message should be stated. If main aspect of the subject is not covered in second paragraph then this paragraph should be extended in next one or maximum two. More paragraphs in letter can be harmful for the business & reader can neglect & feel monotony while reading such long letter. So, the writer should avoid too many things to be covered in single letter.

In the concluding or closing paragraph, writer must state clearly, what action is expected from reader or may end letter indicating writer's expectations, wishes or intentions.

9. **Complimentary close:** After completion of main body of letter, formal close is written to the left hand side of the letter at bottom. The formal close must be matched with salutation. If the salutation does not include name of the recipient, the formal close is „yours faithfully“. If the salutation names recipient, the formal close is „yours sincerely“. The word „yours“ always begins with capital letter “Y” but „faithfully & sincerely“ always begins with small letter. A comma should be placed after complementary close.

Following are the some examples of formal close:

Salutations	Formal close
Dear sir/madam,-----	Yours faithfully,
Dear Ajay,-----	Yours Sincerely,
Dear gentleman/ My dear,-----	Yours truly,
Respected sir/madam,-----	Yours respectfully,

Yours respectfully is used when person to whom you are writing letter occupying very high position like Ministers, Ambassadors or person occupying secretariat post or equivalent.

10. **Signature:** It is the signed name of the writer. It comes below the complementary close. It should be always hand written. Stamp of signature is not

authorized for valuable information written. The person going to sign the letter, he should keep four spaces below complementary close & write down his/her full name with designation in business organization.

The style of the signature differs according to the authority of person. Following are the some examples of signature:

1. For individual

Yours faithfully,

(Gorakhnath G. mane)
For.....

For partnership firm

Yours faithfully,
M/s Jonson & Jonson

(Mr. Martin Jonson)
Partner/secretary.

For company

Yours faithfully,
Bajaj Auto Ltd.

(Mr. S.Y. Sawant)
Finance officer.

11. Identification mark: these marks are put in the left hand margin to identify the typist of letter. It is written one or two spaces below the signature. e.g. If the letter is dictated by Mr. S.V. Sharma and typed by Miss. Sarita Shirke, the identification marks may be put in either of following ways

a. SVS/SD

b. SVS:SD

In SD in these case only names of the person who typed letter is mentioned.

12. Enclosure: very often a letter carries long with it some important papers, such as proof of date of birth, copies of certificates/testimonials, price list, invoice, receipts, bill/cash memo, cheque, draft, photocopies of previous communication and so on. The writer must mention these documents at the bottom left side margin by any one of the following way:

1. Enclosures: four [only number of documents attached is mentioned.]

2. Encl: a.

b.

c.

d.

3. Enclosed Mark sheet, Identity card, Pan Card, Aadhar card

etc.

13. Post script: „Post Script“ is the word derived from Latin word „Post scriptum“, it means mention something afterwards. Post script regarding letter means, if the writer has forgotten to mention something which is important and necessary to mention, has to be written under this heading. Generally, a writer is not supposed to forget any important item. But some information or part of concern message may flow after the letter has been written or typed; the writer has supposed to mention it under post script very carefully and precisely.

14. Courtesy copy or CC: When the copies of a letter are supposed to be sent to some other people, directly or indirectly, concerned with the same matter or subject. In such cases the name of the persons to whom copies are sent should be types adjacent to the left margin like below:

CC Mr. G.B.

Mane or

Copy to Mr. G.B.

Mane. or

Copies to Mr. G.B.Mane & Miss. Sonali Shirke