

Nature Types and Principles of Writing Good Business Letters

After reading this lesson you will be able to:

- ✓ Explain the nature, types of various business letters
- ✓ understand and apply the principles of writing good business letters

Letters Defined

The digital age produces lots of documents, like letters, reports, memos, and notices. Whether you're in the public or private sector, or at home or abroad, you have to write letters to share information with others.

You might write to give someone information or ask for information from them. You might want a refund for a damaged product or want to offer condolences to a colleague whose spouse passed away. Regardless of your reason, you write to fulfill a certain need and inform others.

Your primary objective when writing a letter is to fulfill that need. Sometimes, you may have multiple objectives, such as giving instructions and acknowledging an order in the same letter.

Additionally, businesses have a secondary objective of improving their public image through their correspondence. The letters a company writes can create a strong impression and can impact its success and profits.

First, letters are highly personalized messages, for they single out a special reader and, usually a letter is written by a single writer not by a team.

Second, they have the more formal effect than most face to face communication.

Third, they receive the added impetus of the printed word and have the quality of performance.

So a company can create good public relations only by presenting its face in the best possible way through good business letters.

Letters provide data for two main purposes:

1. To fulfill certain needs;
2. To elicit a definite response and to make the reader to be on the Writer's side.

Types of Business Letters

Letters typically go to people outside the organizations.

By writing letters you in fact present your organization's image and face to the outside world.

As a family member, or social person you do write personal letters conveying your feelings, interests, good news, and bad news, depending on the type of relationship you have with the reader and also on the message that is being conveyed.

Business letters are written and received for keeping all business transactions, and relationships, perfect, and live in the business world.

Most formal letters fall under three main categories:

Writing 'yes': accepting something, agreeing to a plan.

Writing 'no': refusing something or disagreeing with a plan or offer.

Writing for action: to move people to do something, to persuade or to give orders sometimes.

On the job you might write the following common types of letters:

- a. **Sales Promotion letter** designed to create interest in a product or service.
- b. **Letter of instructions** outlining a procedure to be carried out by the reader.
- c. **Letter of transmittal** (cover letters) to accompany reports and other documents that you will mail out.
- d. **Letter of recommendation** for friends, fellow workers, or past employees.
- e. **General business letters** describing progress on a project, requesting assistance, ordering parts or tools, confirming meeting times, and so on.
- f. **Letter of inquiry**, asking about the cost or availability of a product, requesting advice for solving a problem, soliciting comments about a job applicant, and so on.
- g. **Complaint letters** were written to complain about disappointing service or faulty products and to request an adjustment.

You may also need to write a letter in response to those letters received by your company.

You might also write letters to apply to colleges, compete for scholarships, or foreign study programs, or join campus organizations.

These application letters are considered important for good reasons:

They provide evidence of your talent for clear self-expression, your level of confidence, your sensitivity to your readers, your ability to recognize important points, your attention to detail your mastery of logical reasoning and your level of maturity and personality development.

Principles of Writing Good Letters

Depending upon its quality your letter will either open doors or, be a waste of time. So to be an effective letter writer think of the good communication principles that you can apply in writing a business letter.

The following basic principles will help you to produce a letter which is most likely to achieve the desired result.

- Remember the basic rule: never send a letter until you genuinely feel confident about signing it; your signature certifies your approval of the content

The You Approach

In writing a letter you face a blank page; you can easily write to please yourself only, forgetting that a flesh-and-blood person will be reading your letter.

The "you" perspective affects your tone and as the letter is more personal than a report, tone is the major ingredient of your message.

Put yourself in your reader's place; ask yourself how readers will respond to what you have just written. Your letter creates a relationship with reader. So the words should be chosen carefully in order not to offend and confuse the reader.

Instead of writing:

"I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated, and I have to inform you that"

It is better to write :

"Thank you for your letter of, you will be pleased to know that"

Plain English

The reader of a business letter is not interested in the type of person who has written the letter but in the content of the letter i.e., what the letter say, and how simply and easily he can grasp the message, and help his organization

So avoid stuffy, tired and over blown phrases (letters) that you might think will impress your reader. Here are a few of the many Letters that make letters unimaginative and boring:

Do not use	use
letters	Translated into plain English
As per your request	As you requested
Contingent upon receipt of	As soon we receive
I beg to differ	I disagree
It is imperative that you reply	You must reply
Please be advised that my new address is	My new address is
We are in hopes that you succeed	Good luck In the immediate future
Soon I humbly request that you consider	Please consider
Pursuant to our agreement	As we agreed
I beg to acknowledge receipt of	I received

Clear Purpose

Before writing as you plan, answer these questions:

- A. What purpose do I wish to achieve (get a job, file a complaint, ask for an information, answer an inquiry, give instructions, share good news, share bad news).**
- B. What facts does my reader know? (Dates, cost, model numbers, enclosures, measurements, other details).**
- C. To whom am I writing? (Reader's name? or title? write to a person not a title).**
- D. What is my relationship with reader? (Is he an employer, employee, a person asking for favors, customer asking for refund, an associate, a stranger?)**

Answer to all of the above questions will help you prepare the draft and after writing the draft ask yourself three more questions such as:

- a. How will my readers react to my statement as phrased? (With anger, hostility, pleasure, confusion, resistance, satisfaction).**
- b. What impression will readers get from my letter? (Courteous, friendly, confident, dull, intelligent)**
- c. Am I ready to sign my letter? (This one will take you to some more thought)**

Do not submit or mail your letter until you have answered these questions and keep on revising as often as you need to achieve your purpose.

Aim for brevity, accuracy, and conviction

This one is the most important principle of all communication skills. For readability, keep your letter short, straight, formal and right to the point.

Give readers as much as they need no more no less even. Also write with conviction i.e., write what you believe in, in order to sound convincing to your readers.

Direct-Indirect Plan

The reaction that you visualize from your readers should help you organize your material whether you should apply direct or indirect method of writing. In the direct plan you put the main points right away in your body section of the letter followed by explanation. Usually use the **direct plan** for good news writing, inquiry or application or other routine correspondence.

If you expect your reader to disapprove or need to be persuading or refusing a claim then use the **indirect plan** i.e., give the explanation before the main points. The **indirect plan** in fact makes readers more tolerant of bad news or more receptive to the writer's arguments stated in the letter.

SUMMARY

- **Think before you write**
- **Analyse the purpose of the letter and reader's needs**
- **Make sure you have included all the points relevant to your purpose**
- **Use a courteous tone and 'you' approach**
- **Use plain, precise English and avoid Letterese**

- **Be concise and keep your language warm and personal**