

Techniques of Writing Effective Letters

After reading this lesson you will be able to:

- ✓ identify the standard parts and specialized parts of formal letters
- ✓ Select and use the appropriate and accepted format (provided in the lesson) for writing any formal letters.

Introduction

An efficient document, or a letter, or a report is never just 'happens' instead, the writer plans, organizes, and revises to meet the purpose of the letter, document, and readers' needs and interest. Also to make it an effective one, the writer connects its writing with the readers by recognizing their differences in background, their specific needs, temperaments, preferences, fears, attitude, etc.

Whenever you write a formal business letter make sure that you include the structure of all good communications, and also the required general parts. Depending on the nature, and type of letters that you will be writing, you might have to include the specialised parts essential for formal business letters.

Introduction-Body-Conclusion Structure

All useful messages whether in the form of a book, chapter, news article, report, or memo typically follow a common organising pattern:

Introduction - Body - Conclusion

Most letters include a brief introduction paragraph (having three to five lines, or fewer) in which you identify yourself, and your purpose for writing the letter.

There may be one or more paragraphs in your body section of the letter detailing the messages you want to convey.

Then comes the conclusion section. Where you tie up your information and courteously encourage your readers to act.

Standard Parts

Letters typically have six parts, in order from top to bottom:

heading,
inside address, salutation,
the text (Introduction-body-conclusion),
complimentary close, and signature.

Heading

If your stationary is blank, include your address and the date (do not include your name) as shown in Fig.-1 of this lesson. But, if you have a stationary containing letter head of your company, then simply include the date two lines below the letterhead as shown in Fig.-1 of this lesson. Depending on the length of the letter, place your heading at least one inch below the top of your page and far enough to the right. Avoid abbreviations except the Postal Services two-letter state abbreviations (foreign countries like UK USA) when addressing the envelope and in the heading itself.

Sample below.

Street Address..... House # 16, Road # 2
Dhanmondi R/A

City, Post Code..... Dhaka 1205, Bangladesh

Month, Day, Year..... August 20, 1995

Inside Address

Place your inside address using the reader's title (Director General) two to six spaces below your heading and near the left margin. Include only the routinely abbreviated titles such as (Mr., Ms., Dr.). Titles such as major, captain are written out in full.

Do not write "Dr. A. M. Safi Ph.D." only write Dr. A. M. Safi.

Salutation

Place your salutation two spaces below your inside address. Begin your salutation with "Dear" and end with a colon ("Dear Mr. Zafar"). Always include the person's full title. Use the attention line if you do not know the person's name or sender but only know the position title. Current trend is to address reader by his or her first name if that is the way of addressing people in that country. For example, the Germans get annoyed if you address them by first name. Also people from China, Japan, Bangladesh, India, and Mexico do not appreciate the informal tone which is so common in British and American culture. So to overcome this difficulty you should be aware of the culture of that country before communicating in letter form.

Example:

Dear Ms. Jerina:

Dear Mr. Haroon:

Also people consider the greeting 'Dear Sir' or 'Madam' appropriate in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, but these type of greetings are too formal, and old-fashioned according to British and American culture. So it is sometimes best to use the attention line.

Letter Text

Begin your introduction two spaces below your salutation. For letters that will fill most of the page, use single-spacing within the paragraphs, and double-spacing between. For short letters double space within paragraphs, and triple-space between to balance the page.

Complimentary Close

Place your complimentary close two spaces below the concluding paragraph, aligned with your heading. Make sure the complimentary close parallel the level of formality in your salutation, and reflects your relationship with the reader. Some conventional complimentary close is as follows:

Respectfully, Sincerely, Cordially, Best wishes,
Warmest regards,

Regards,
Truly,

The complimentary close is followed by a comma.

Signature

Type your full name and title four spaces below your complimentary close. Sign in the space between.

Sincerely,

SHIHAB ZAFAR
Research Associate

Fig.-1 A sample letter to show various parts of a letter

PANKASH PAPER CO. BEACH ROAD, COX'S BAZAR
August 20, 1995
Mr. Jamal Uddin 20 Ranking Street Dhaka-1000
ATTENTION : Mr. Uddin
In answer to your inquiry about leasing lakeside areas at Cox's Bazar, we have no lands for lease in "highly remote areas." We have some limited number of leases available, but you would have to visit our office to know the exact location.
Drop by in any week day morning between 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. You need to apply for a building permit too.
Thank you for your inquiry.
Yours truly,
PANKASH PAPER COMPANY
PRIMA KABIR Town Site Manager
PK/pc

Fig.-2 SAMPLE OF A CONTINUATION PAGE; BLOCKED FORMAT

Md. Jamal Uddin August 20, 1995, Page-2
Sincerely yours,
Writer's Signature
WRITERS TYPED NAME
PK/pc
Enclosure:
cc.: Mr. S. Murray Ms. Tanya Zafar

LETTER UNBLOCKED FORMAT

(On letterhead stationary, the writer's address will already be printed)

