



Business Writing

When writing a business letter, your goal is to communicate your message clearly and concisely while creating a positive impression of yourself and your organization. Here are some tips to help you make a stronger impression with your business letter.

Basic Letter Format

Margins

Set margins at 1-1.5 inches at the left and right, top and bottom.

Paragraphs

Single-space within paragraphs; double-space between paragraphs. Do not indent the first line of the paragraph.

Justification

Use left justification and leave the right margin ragged (uneven).

Basic Letter Details

Heading

The heading provides the reader with a return address. Type the address (do not include the writer's name) at the top of the letter. The address should be aligned on the left side of the page. Spell out words such as *Road, Street, and West*. If you are using letterhead stationary (stationary with the sender's name and contact information already printed on it), omit the address.

Date

Date the letter with the date on which you are writing it, in Month Day, Year format (e.g., July 19, 1997). Place it directly below the heading. Do not abbreviate the month or use a number in its place.

5 Hill Street
Madison, WI 53700
March 10, 2006

Inside Address

The inside address gives the name and complete mailing address of the person to whom the letter is sent. Type it flush left and include as many details as necessary, in this order: Reader's name, (including title and job title [if one word]); reader's job title (if two or more words);

office or department; organization name; street address/PO box/suite/room; city, state, ZIP code; country (if not the US).

Mrs. Abigail Brown, Manager
Rena's Restaurant
3706 Chamberlain Avenue, Southeast
Bar Harbor, ME 04609

Dr. Willard R. Moss
Vice President
Empire Check Printing
200 Renaissance Drive
Detroit, MI 40610

Salutation

The salutation personalizes the message. Capitalize all first letters and place a colon after the name.

Dear Ms. Brown:

Dear Dr. Moss:

Body

Each paragraph should be single-spaced and left-justified. Do not indent at the beginning of your paragraphs. Skip a line between paragraphs. Organize the body of your letter into three parts.

1. **Opening:** State the situation (reason for writing, background information).
2. **Middle:** Give the full explanation, supporting points and details. If your message is good or neutral news, make your key point early. For bad news or a persuasive message, build up to the main point.
3. **Closing:** End with a call for action (what should happen next) and, if appropriate, mention future contact.

Example: The claim of your client, Mr. Kevin A. Murphy, for \$850 to replace the golf clubs that were stolen from him in Scottsdale is covered under his homeowner's policy.

To process Mr. Murphy's claim, we must have a copy of the police report filed at the time of the theft. Please contact the police agency handling the theft report and have the agency forward us a copy addressed to my attention.

As soon as we receive the police report, Mr. Murphy's check will be sent to your office.

The first paragraph states the situation and provides the purpose for writing. The second paragraph gives the reader details they need, and the final paragraph tells the reader what should happen next.



Sample Business Letter

101 East Street
Durham, NH 03824
July 18, 2008

Mr. James Jones, President
Speed-E Delivery Services
4321 State Avenue
Detroit, MI 40610

Dear Mr. Jones:

Recently, I used your company's services to ship homemade cookies to my aunt, who lives in California. I was dismayed when my aunt called to say the cookies had arrived moldy and crumbly. They also arrived a week late.

I am writing to request a refund for the shipping and handling charges. I have included a receipt for the shipping and handling charges to assist you in processing my request. I hope the request will be processed as quickly as possible.

I have used your services many times before for shipping my homemade treats, and they have always arrived fresh and in a timely manner. I sincerely hope this is an isolated incident and that my future shipments of baked goods will not meet similar fates.

Yours sincerely,

Clara Whittle

Enclosures (1)

