

How to Write a Business Letter

You'll write numerous different letters in the course of your business, but they should all be set out in a similar way.

Just as with documentation of essays, so, too, with business letters - there's no one right way of setting out. The important thing is to experiment with the different ways and then to settle on one way and to stay with it. The following are suggested layouts for business letters using letterheads and fully typed letters.

Contents of a Business Letter

a business letter has five main parts:

- * the heading
- * the date
- * the opening
- * the body
- * the closing.

The Heading

This is your name and address.

You can use your fancy letterhead or just type up your business name and address.

The letterhead address can be positioned anywhere on the top of the page: centred, left side or right side.

However, if you're typing the business address, it should be located in the top right-hand corner.

The Date

The **date** is very important, since it can be useful in determining priorities, for filing and it also can have legal ramifications.

In a typed address letter, the date goes immediately under your address.

In a letterhead letter, the date can go on the **left-hand side**, or the **right-hand side**, immediately under the letterhead.

*Write101.com
32 MacDonnell Road
MARGATE BEACH 4019
1 January 2003*

The method of writing the date shown here is the easiest and **least** likely to lead to confusion. It looks neat and is clear and concise.

Always write the name of the month; if you are dealing with overseas clients or markets, or even with people who were born overseas, you can run into all sorts of problems if you only use numbers:

11-3-01 could be 11 March 2003 OR 3 November 2003, depending on where you come from!

The Opening

This is the:

- Name
- title (if any *Manager, Principal* etc)
- address of the person to whom you are writing and the greeting or salutation.

This information always goes on the **left-hand side** of the page, starting one line lower than your business name and address and the date.

Write101.com
32 MacDonnell Road MARGATE BEACH Q 4019
1 January 2003

Mr Garth Hopper
Manager
Country Publications
PO Box 123
SYDNEY 2003

Dear Garth,

or

Write101.com
32 MacDonnell Road
MARGATE BEACH 4019
1 January 2003

Mr Garth Hopper
Manager
Country Publications
PO Box 123
SYDNEY 2003

Dear Garth,

The Body

This is like the message in your memo and it follows the same rules in that it should be:

- clear
- concise
- courteous.

The way you organise the body of your letter will depend on the reason for writing it ... naturally.

The Content

When writing a business letter, you must be sure that **no** part of your letter will be misunderstood. This is why the language you use should be simple. There are no prizes for using the biggest words in a business letter - especially if your reader is not familiar with the words and has to waste time finding out what you mean.

Worse still - if you are not familiar with the words you've used - you make yourself look a right twit! And that is definitely **not** good for business.

Time is money these days, so you need to ensure that you make your point as quickly as you can in any correspondence.

Like any other piece of writing a business letter should have a beginning, a middle and an end.

It doesn't matter how short a letter is, the important thing is to communicate your message effectively. Don't feel you have to 'fill up' the page to make it look 'balanced'.

The Most Important Step

And always (always) proofread your letter before you send it. Better still, have an editing program guiding you every step of the way!

The Closing

This includes the final words to your reader - the bit that tells him or her what action will follow or thanks him or her for any help given. It also includes the 'signing off' and name of the writer.

It is customary to sign off, 'Yours faithfully' if it is a formal business letter **or** if you don't know the name of the person; you sign 'Yours sincerely' when you do know the name of the person.

It is acceptable to use less formal closings - 'Kind regards', 'Regards'- if the whole tone of your letter has been the same, but don't end a very formal letter in this way.

Your closing signature can be placed on the **left-hand side** of the letter (which makes it easier on the typist) or on the **right-hand side** - in line with the address (if the address has been typed in the right-hand corner and / or with the date (if it has been placed in the right-hand corner).

Business Letter – Format

- ① Street address
City, Province, Postal Code ←- *Writer's Address*
- ② Date
- ③ Name
Title, Company name (if applicable)
Street address
City, Province, Postal Code ←- *Recipient's name and address*
- ④ Dear Mr./Mrs. Last name: ←- *Salutation*
- ⑤ First paragraph: An introduction to state the main purpose you are writing.
- ⑥ Second paragraph: Supporting details.
- ⑦ Third paragraph: A specific request or recommendation for a course of action.

(*Note: Leave one space between paragraphs. Do not indent paragraphs.)
- ⑧ Closing,
- ⑨ *Signature*
- ⑩ Printed Name

Business Letter – Format

① Street address
City, Province, Postal Code

<- Writer's Address

② Date

③ Name
Title, Company name (if applicable)
Street address
City, Province, Postal Code

<- Recipient's name and address

④ Dear Mr./Mrs. Last name:

<- Salutation

⑤ First paragraph: An introduction to state the main purpose you are writing.

⑥ Second paragraph: Supporting details.

⑦ Third paragraph: A specific request or recommendation for a course of action.

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⑧ Closing,

⑨ *Signature*

⑩ Printed Name

SAMPLE BUSINESS LETTER FORMAT

Morris Howard
Wicked Wax Co. Ltd
22 Charlton Way
London, SE10 8QY

« SENDER'S ADDRESS
« may be printed company logo and address

5 December 2006

« DATE

Ms. Maggie Jones
Angel Cosmetics Inc.
110 East 25th Street
New York, NY, 10021
USA

« RECIPIENT'S ADDRESS

Dear Ms. Jones,

« SALUTATION

First paragraph...

« BODY OF LETTER

Second paragraph...

Third paragraph...

Sincerely,

« CLOSING

Morris Howard

« SIGNATURE (HAND-WRITTEN)

Morris Howard, President

« NAME, TITLE (TYPED)

cc: Brian Waldorf

« COPY TO

Enc: catalogue

« ENCLOSURE

Sample Business Letter

Tara Orme ✱
Claremont Secondary School
4980 Wesley Road
Victoria B.C.
V8Y 1Y9

10 December 2006

December 10th 2006

Darren Johnson
Manager
McDonald's Restaurant
4410 West Saanich Rd
Victoria, BC
V8Z 3E9

Dear Mr. Johnson:

My name is Tara Orme and I am a teacher at Claremont Secondary School. I am writing to compliment you for doing an outstanding job training your staff. Every time I visit your restaurant, I am struck by how courteous and well trained your employees are. *Who/Why*

On November 25th, 2006, I was in your restaurant eating lunch when a young man came in, obviously inebriated, and started verbally abusing the employee who was attempting to take his order. The employee calmly called over the manager, who diffused this difficult situation quickly, and with a sense of humour. Both employees were professional and should be congratulated for remaining calm in a situation that could have easily escalated and resulted in injury. *What/Details*

I hope you will pass on my message to these outstanding employees. And, keep up the good work. *Ask for Action*

Best Regards,

Tara Orme

Tara Orme, Teacher

cc: Peter Turpin, President McDonald's Restaurants Inc.