BUSINESS LETTER FORMAT

Your name
Your street address
Your City, State and ZIP

Date on which letter is written

Recipient’s Title (Ms., Mrs., Mr., Dr., etc.) and First and Last Name
Recipient’s business title (Human Resources Director, Chief Executive Officer, etc.)
Company Name
Street Address
City, State and Zip

Dear [Title and Last name of Recipient]:

First paragraph… introduce yourself and state why you are writing. Make the statement or request in clear and purposeful language. Be polite and use formal language (no contractions).

Second paragraph … include information relevant to your goal, such as facts about your background, questions you may have, or solutions to a problem you pose. Remember, without solutions, you are only complaining!

Third paragraph … thank the recipient in advance for whatever actions he or she may take in regard to your request in the first paragraph. Tell him/her how to contact you.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Don’t put a comma between State Abbreviation and Zip. Example: Bakersfield, CA 93311

This is called the INSIDE ADDRESS

This is called the SALUTATION and always concludes with a colon

After you print your letter, sign your name above your typed name, in cursive, using blue or black ink

Adapted from: Purdue Online Writing Lab<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/653/01/>2 December 2010.
BUSINESS LETTER FORMAT

Remember you should NOT use contractions, you should be polite (even when complaining), and you must use formal tone and language.

Typing format: Block style. Use Times New Roman 12, set margins to 1", align (justify) all text to the left margin.

Sender’s Address: If you are using your own or your company letterhead, you don’t need to type your address above the date.

Date: The date line is used to indicate the date the letter was written. However, if your letter is completed over a number of days, use the date it was finished in the date line. When writing to companies within the United States, use the American date format. (The United States-based convention for formatting a date places the month before the day. For example: June 11, 2001.)

Inside Address: The inside address is the recipient's address. It is always best to write to a specific individual at the firm to which you are writing. If you do not have the person's name, do some research by calling the company or speaking with employees from the company. Include a personal title such as Ms., Mrs., Mr., or Dr. Follow a woman's preference in being addressed as Miss, Mrs., or Ms. If you are unsure of a woman's preference in being addressed, use Ms. If there is a possibility that the person to whom you are writing is a Dr. or has some other title, use that title. Usually, people will not mind being addressed by a higher title than they actually possess. To write the address, use the U.S. Post Office Format. For international addresses, type the name of the country in all-capital letters on the last line.

Salutation: Use the same name as the inside address, including the personal title. If you know the person and typically address them by their first name, it is acceptable to use only the first name in the salutation (for example: Dear Lucy:]. In all other cases, however, use the personal title and full name followed by a colon. Leave one line blank after the salutation.

If you don’t know a reader's gender, use a nonsexist salutation, such as "To Whom It May Concern." It is also acceptable to use the full name in a salutation if you cannot determine gender. For example, you might write Dear Chris Harmon: if you were unsure of Chris's gender.

Body: For block format, single space and left justify each paragraph within the body of the letter. Do not indent paragraphs. Leave a blank line between each paragraph. When writing a business letter, be careful to remember that conciseness is very important. In the first paragraph, consider a friendly opening and then a statement of the main point. The next paragraph should begin justifying the importance of the main point. In the next few paragraphs, continue justification with background information and supporting details. The closing paragraph should restate the purpose of the letter and, in some cases, request some type of action.

Closing: The closing begins one line after the last body paragraph. Capitalize the first word only (for example: Thank you) and leave four lines between the closing and the sender's name for a signature. Use a comma after the closing.

Enclosures: If you have enclosed any documents along with the letter, such as a resume, you indicate this simply by typing Enclosures one line below the closing.

Font: Another important factor in the readability of a letter is the font. The generally accepted font is Times New Roman, size 12, although other fonts such as Arial may be used. When choosing a font, always consider your audience. If you are writing to a conservative company, you may want to use Times New Roman. However, if you are writing to a more liberal company, you have a little more freedom when choosing fonts.

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