

FRESHMAN ENGLISH - 102

LETTER WRITING

Introduction

Letters are messages. Letter writing, therefore, is a way of communicating with people. A good understanding of the language is important for effective letter writing. Every educated person should know how to write a clear and readable letter. The art of letter writing is, therefore, no mere ornamental accomplishment, but something that every educated person must acquire for practical reasons.

Importance of planning a letter:

Planning plays an important part in the successful execution of any task. An ill-planned letter is no exception and is sure to arouse similar feelings in the reader. Planning is essential for letter writing too. Every letter is written to meet a particular situation. The plan of a letter depends on the kind of situation you are writing for. Many situations are relatively simple. For example:

- ❖ Describing an experience,
- ❖ Describing a situation,
- ❖ Describing an operation,
- ❖ Making a request, (including applying for jobs)
- ❖ Replying to a request,
- ❖ Asking for a catalogue,
- ❖ Placing an order, and so on.

These can be handled by more or less a set pattern of letters with minor variations to meet specific requirements. But even such letters should be planned carefully. By doing so, you will be able to add grace and freshness even to routine correspondence. After some experience you will find that the plan of a letter comes to you without much effort but it is essential to picture the whole pattern of composition before writing it.

Kinds of Letters

There are several kinds of letters ranging from very intimate personal matters to highly formal official issues. Therefore, letters are broadly categorized into two - (1) Personal Letters and (2) Business Letters.

(1) Personal Letters

Personal letters are those that deal with personal matters. These are the letters that we write to relatives, friends or acquaintances. Personal letters may express informal thoughts and feelings between people who are very intimate; for example, love letters. Such letters are not bound by general rules of letter writing. Also, personal letters are social letters. Subject matter of such letters ranges from a congratulation, a thank-you, an invitation, etc. to providing information in reply to a letter. Personal letters may also be semi-formal.

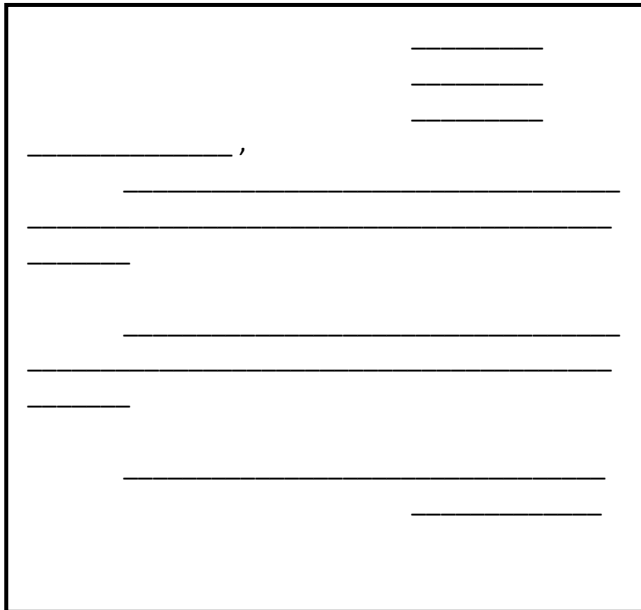
(2) Business Letters

Business letters are those that deal with impersonal, official or formal public matters. The writer and the addressee of these letters may or may not know each other. Business letters are written by one in his private capacity; for example, a private individual writing to a firm asking for information some goods sold by the firm, making a complaint of the quality of the purchased goods, etc. An individual or a company also writes business letters in official capacity; for example, an employer writing to an employee informing him that he has been promoted, a government officer addressing an individual's official issue, etc. Also, if business letters are exchanged between people who know each other, the letters may be semi-personal or semi-private.

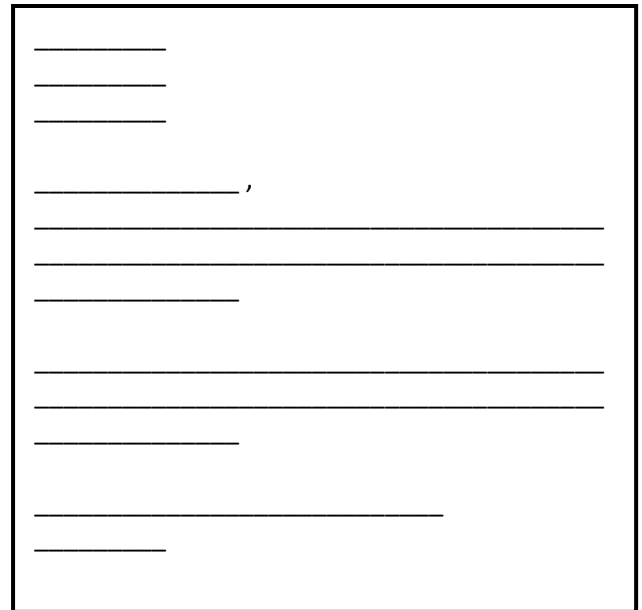
Format of Letters

Knowing how to write a letter is a fundamental skill you normally use in personal relationships, school, and business to communicate information, goodwill, or just affection. Here is a basic guide on how to put your thoughts to paper in the correct format.

There are several letter-writing formats practiced world over by individuals and companies; for example, 'indented format', 'block format', 'semi-block format', 'administrative management style format', etc. The 'indented' and 'block' formats, however, are widely used by individuals and professionals.



Indented Format



Block Format

Indented format is the most traditional one. It is generally used to write personal or social letters. In this format, indents are used to separate paragraphs. The block format is used for business letters. Each item in this format is aligned with the left margin of the paper without indentation. One line is left blank to separate paragraphs. In the modern computerized world today, block format has gained popularity for writing social as well as business letters. Therefore, all through the unit, we will primarily focus on the block format of writing letters for uniformity and for easy understanding of letter writing techniques.

Parts of a Letter

Every letter – either personal or business - consists of six distinct parts: (1) heading, (2) salutation, (3) communication or the body of the letter, (4) complimentary close or subscription or leave taking, (5) signature, and (6) envelope address. All these parts are described below:

1. **Heading:** Every letter usually begins with the heading. The heading part consists of (a) the writer's complete address and (b) the date. The name of the country is also given if the letter is addressed to someone in a foreign country. The date forms the last line in the heading. However, if the letter is written on a printed letterhead (such as business letters written by company executives), the letter writer's name and address is not mentioned since the letterhead already has the details. Therefore, the letter starts directly with the date followed by the name and address of the recipient to whom the letter is directed.

For example:

Millena Tesfamichael, Sembel Complex, Asmara, Eritrea. Ph. 01234567. April 1, 2015.
Adiar Michael, Goodwill Service Inc., Awet Street. Asmara.

Letter without printed Letterhead

MILLENA TESFAMICHAEL SEMBEL COMPLEX ASMARA, ERITREA, PH. 01234567
April 1, 2015.
Adiar Michael, Goodwill Service Inc., Awet Street. Asmara.

Letter with printed Letterhead

The date in the heading part may be written in any of the following ways:

28 April 2014
28th April 2014
April 28, 2014.

2. **Salutation or Greeting:** The salutation appears at the left hand side margin, two spaces below the date. It consists of the words with which you greet a person or a firm to whom you are writing. The salutation in personal letters is followed by a comma and in business letters either a comma (British style) or a colon (American style). The form of Greeting will depend upon the relation in which you stand to the person to whom you are writing.

To the members of the family, for example, it will be---

- Dear Father, My dear Mother, Dear Uncle, etc.

To friends, it will be---

- Dear Mussie, Dear Mr. Mussie, or Dear Ms. Sanait, etc.

To business people---

- Dear Sir, Dear Sirs, Dear, or sometimes, simply Sir, etc.

Please note: It was once the custom to use “Dear Sir” or “Dear Madam” in greeting an individual not personally known to the writer; but now the address is usually written in a more friendly fashion by name, whenever the name is known.

3. **The communication or Body of the letter:** The body of the letter is that part in which the sender writes his message or states his business. It begins on the line below the salutation. This is, of course, the letter itself, and the style in which it is written will depend upon the kind of letter you wish to write. The style of a letter to an intimate friend will be very different from that of a purely business letter or an official communication.

Here are some suggested openings:

Personal Letters:

- Thank you so much
- I can't thank you enough for
- It was really so kind of you to
- I hope you are well
- Many congratulations on

Business Letters:

- Thank you for your letter dated
- I received your letter of
- I wish to
- I wonder if
- I would like to order/enquire/complain/suggest

A few more hints for the communication (the body) are given below:

- ❖ Divide your letter into paragraphs to separate subject-matter.
- ❖ Use simple and direct language and short sentences. Be clear about what you want to say, and say it as directly as possible.
- ❖ Try to be complete. It is a sign of slovenly thinking when you have to add **post- scripts (PS)** at the end of a letter. Think out what you want to say before you begin to write; and put down your points in some logical order.
- ❖ Write neatly and concisely. Remember that your reader has to read what you write. Do not give him unnecessary trouble with bad penmanship and slovenly writing.
- ❖ Mind your punctuation - use commas, semicolons and full stops wherever necessary. Incorrect punctuation may alter the whole meaning of a sentence.

4. **The Complimentary Close or Subscription or Courteous Leave-taking:** A letter must not end abruptly, simply with the writer's name. These should end gracefully. In earlier times, people used long sentences like "Believe me, Sir, to be your most humble and obedient servant", etc. All that is left of today is the word "Yours".

- ❖ In personal letters, a number of affectionate closings may be used. For example:
Love, With love, Fondly, Affectionately, Yours lovingly, Yours ever, etc.
- ❖ Certain other forms of polite leave-taking for business letters are given below:
 - Yours sincerely,
 - Yours sincere friend,
 - Yours faithfully, etc.

5. **The Signature or the name of the writer:** This must come below the subscription with one line left blank for the actual signature of the letter writer. A letter is not complete until it has been signed by the writer. For this reason, the writer's name usually appears twice in business letters – once in the form of a signature, and once clearly written or typed under his actual signature. If the writer is using

a letter-head with his name printed at the top, he need not write it again below his signature. For example:

_____ .
_____ .
Yours sincerely, Abraham

A woman should prefix to the name Miss or Mrs in brackets. Ms can be used in parenthesis by a woman who does not wish to be called Miss or Mrs. For example:

_____ .
_____ .
Yours faithfully, Saba
(Ms) Saba Abraham

6. **Addressing the envelope:** The envelope is addressed on the front side. It is written just below a little to the right of the centre of the envelope. The sender's address may be written at the upper left corner or on the back of the envelope.

❖ **Points to note:**

1. Personal letters are naturally informal and should therefore be written in an easy, conventional style. They are of the nature of a friendly chat. However, formal invitations are business-like in tone.
2. Business letters, on the other hand, are formal in style. They are written with a practical purpose and should therefore be clear, courteous and to the point.
3. When you are writing a letter, you should always keep in mind to whom you are writing. The tone of your letter should be in keeping with the subject matter and your relationship with the person being addressed.
4. Add the word "Enclosure" below your signature block or job title if you are enclosing other material, such as a resume or schedule, along with the letter. If there more than one extra item, it would be good to list the names of the enclosed documents.
5. Proof read your letter. Double check the spelling of names, address etc. Make sure your writing is clear and concise. Fix grammatical errors, if any.
6. Be precise, clear and concise in your writing. Also, keep in mind the time required by the reader to understand your.
7. Type your letter. It looks much more professional.
8. Be courteous even if you have to exhibit your anger or denial and disaffirmation.

Here are a few examples of model letters. Study the format and the language of these letters closely and think whether you can write similar letters in appropriate format. Try to write as many letters as you can for practice from the exercise that is given after the model letters.

Personal Letter

Example 1: Letter to a friend greeting him on the occasion of the Independence Day Celebrations.

Awet Tesfaldet,
Semetet Street,
Asmara.
13 April 2014.

Dear Fanuel,

I hope this letter finds you in the best spirits. It's time we exchange greetings, for our nation will soon be celebrating the Independence Day. My friends and I would like to express our spirit of unity and oneness on Independence Day.

May the internal and communal disturbances give way to religious tolerance, harmony and peace! Since you are in EIT, I suppose we will be celebrating it with a sense of patriotic discipline.

Let's nourish the spirit of solidarity for now and all times to come.

Your loving friend,

Awet

Awet Tesfaldet

Example 2: Reply to the aforementioned letter.

Fanuel Abraham,
Harnet Street,
Keren ,
30th April, 2014.

Dear Awet,

It was wonderful to see your letter in my mail box. As you rightly said, the future month May will soon see us marching for the Independence Day parade in our city as well as on the streets leading to the Presidents' house.

The rehearsal session has started and we have little time to spare for other activities. Truly, we have to motivate our little ones with patriotic fervor and enthusiasm. Our country has withstood external aggressions. We need to stand united in all such circumstances. I'm grateful to you for the spirit of an

ideal child as we would all be tomorrow's citizens.

Hope Aman is fine. I conclude this letter like a typical citizen of an honourable country.

Your loving friend,

Fanuel

Fanuel Abraham

Business Letter

Example 1

Example: Block Format

Block Format. Each item in the business letter lines up with the left margin.

Salutation. Note that the salutation is followed by a colon.

Body. Body paragraphs are single spaced. They are separated from one another by a blank line.

Closing. The closing is followed by a comma and a signature.

American Mortgage Company
P.O. Box 19876, Minneapolis, MN 55440
1-800-555-3467

January 22, 2002

Sumita Patel
2345 Main Street
Jacksonville, MO 64829

Dear Ms. Patel:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me about your recent experience with American Mortgage Company. You mentioned a number of errors that occurred during the processing of your mortgage loan. It is our intention to provide a worry-free process to our customers. I assure you that the service you received is not typical of what we provide. Please accept my apology for the problems.

Now that your loan has gone through, you will be working with our servicing office personnel. They are located in Frederick, Maryland and can be reached at 1-800-555-3467. Your loan reference number is 57430238. I am confident that you will be pleased with the service.

Again, thank you for your comments and for choosing American Mortgage Company for your loan. We will be working hard over the life of your loan and hope you will be pleased with our service in the future. We value your business and want to keep it.

Sincerely,

Tim Walton
Tim Walton
Customer Service Representative

Example 2

Millena Tesfamichael
Sembel Complex
Asmara, Eritrea
Ph. 01234567
April 1, 2015

Adiar Michael,
Goodwill Service Inc.,
Awet Street.
Asmara.

Dear Ms. Adiar:

This letter will confirm our arrangement for our son's rehearsal dinner at your facilities. The Whitt – Bryson dinner will be held on the evening of Friday, July 6, 2015 in the sunset Room, which will be set prior to that time.

I have enclosed the initial deposit and will forward the remainder within four weeks of the event. We thank you for all of your help thus far in planning this important event. We look forward to continuing to work with you to make this evening unforgettable for the couple and their friends.

I thank you in anticipation of the arrangements and of your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Millena

(Ms) Millena Tesfamichael

EXERCISE

1. Write a letter to your friend with full description of a thrilling football match.
2. Write a letter to your sister to congratulate her on her engagement.
3. Write a letter to your brother motivating him not to neglect his studies.
4. Write a letter to the manager of a renowned restaurant to reserve a table for two dinners.
5. Write a letter to a publisher for a purchase order of ten recently published books.
6. Write a letter to the Vice President, EIT and request him to arrange Freshman English Textbooks in the EIT library.
7. Write a letter to the HOD, Department of English, regarding the organization of annual social gathering of the students in the college campus.

=== XXX ===