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Writing@CSU Writing Guide

Business Letters

The CSU Writing Studio *Guides to Writing Business Letters* was created by Peter Connor, a former small business owner in Fort Collins, Colorado.

Each guide, located in the list to the left, provides advice regarding a range of issues related to conceptualizing and composing specific types of business letters. You will also find step-by-step instruction and examples.

An Introduction to Writing Business Letters

There are many different kinds of business letters, each identified by the reason for which it was written; a sales letter, for example, or a letter of reference. The hallmark of a well-written business letter is that its objective is clearly understood by its reader. Successful writers help their readers do this by limiting the scope, or the amount of information included in their correspondence.

Keep in mind that an effective business letter always communicates with a person first and a business second. If your letter is a first-time correspondence and you do not know, or are unsure of whom to address, do your best to find out. Addressing your letter to a person improves the likelihood of receiving a reply. It is perfectly acceptable to make a phone call asking for the name of a contact person.

Once you have identified your reader and outlined the contents you intend to include, you can begin drafting your letter. Here are some points to keep in mind. Your letter is about business so keep your tone and style businesslike. Friendly,

too, but businesslike. Consider how you would talk if you were sitting across the conference table instead of writing a letter. Try to imitate, on paper, the voice with which you normally talk.

Be careful about your choice of personal pronouns when you write a business letter. Your reader will interpret its point of view by the choices you make. Since your words will be on paper the reader will see, rather than hear how you talk, so check your sentence structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Written words make an impression, just as spoken words do, so keep in mind this one thing; on paper words create a record. Be mindful of what you say. Your letter, stored in someone's file cabinet, can be referenced at any time. Your signature at the bottom of a letter indicates that you accept responsibility for its contents.

Acceptance Letters

An acceptance letter is a positive response to either an invitation or a job offer. Its objective is to notify the reader of an affirmative decision. The letter should be kept fairly short. Its scope need only include information that relates to the logistical details of accepting the offer.

If you have been offered a job that you intend to accept, write your letter immediately. Remember, you are not the only person that was interviewed. The offer only indicates that you are the employer's "first choice." Delay on your part will communicate a lack of interest and will result in a prospective employer turning to his or her "second choice."

Identify your reader

An acceptance letter should be addressed to a person who has extended you an invitation or a job offer. You will have most likely met this person during a job interview and should place his or her name in the salutation and the inside heading of your acceptance. It should also be included on the top line of your envelope.

Keep in mind that people do business with people. When you personalize your letter, addressing the reader by name, you recognize that person's individual importance and their value as a human being.

Establish your objective

The objective of an acceptance letter is to say "yes" to an invitation or a job offer. It notifies the reader of this decision and affirms the writer's commitment.

Your acceptance should be conveyed in the first sentence, especially when you are accepting a job offer. Include a simple "thank you" as you begin the letter. Courtesy never goes out of style and your reader will appreciate your attention in that regard.

Determine your scope

The scope of your acceptance letter should be brief and upbeat, addressing any formalities or contingencies that relate to the commitment you are making.

In accepting a job offer, restate the title of the position and the expected compensation. Doing so reaffirms the essential details of the offer, eliminates the potential for error, and ensures that your objective is not misunderstood.

Inform your reader of any logistical details that may impact your availability, such as a graduation date, relocation issues that may effect your starting date or the existence of a competing offer. When necessary, address any contingencies that relate to your acceptance, such as finalizing a salary negotiation or an employment package.

Be forthright with the employer. He or she understands that you are making a difficult decision and will normally extend a short grace period in which you may consider your options.

Organize your letter

Organizing your acceptance letter before you begin to write it will establish a logical order in which to present your information. You have already begun this task by

establishing an objective and determining your scope. Refer back to them. Together they include much of the content that will become the body of your letter.

A simple outline will get you organized. Begin by creating a list of relevant points and place them in the sequential order that will best help your reader comprehend your acceptance. These points will become the backbone of your working draft.

Draft your letter

Working from an outline is the simplest way to draft an acceptance letter. You have already organized yourself by creating a list. Refer back to it and turn each fragment into a full and complete sentence expressing a single thought or idea

In order that your thoughts and ideas are conveyed in a cohesive manner, write in as natural a sounding voice as possible. Try writing your draft quickly and then read it out loud. Concentrate on communicating your objective to your reader. Make sure that the scope of your letter contains all the relevant information included in your organizational list.

Keep in mind that you are writing a rough draft. For the moment you can ignore spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence and paragraph structure. Those are technical details that you will pay attention to in the final step when you review and revise your work.

Close Your Letter

An acceptance letter should close in a professional manner. Once your last paragraph is written, sign off between a complimentary close such as "Sincerely," or "Thank you," and your printed name.

If you are writing in conjunction with an official duty, place your title below your printed name. Additional information such as dictation remarks, notification of attachments, enclosures and copies sent to other individuals should be placed beneath the title line.

Review and Revise Your Letter

Reviewing and revising the draft of your acceptance letter is a final inspection, a last check to see whether your objective is clearly stated and your scope concisely defined. Put yourself in the reader's shoes and ask whether the details are accurate and complete.

Look for obvious errors. Check for spelling, sentence structure and grammar mistakes. Your complaint should be direct and to the point, so make sure that you have used a strong active voice.

Keep in mind the overall cohesiveness of your letter. Look for accuracy, clarity and a sense of completeness. Ask yourself if the transitions between paragraphs are working and if your point of view, tone and style are consistent throughout the text.

Examine your word choices carefully. Ambiguous words lead to confusion. Jargon and abstract terms may not be understood at all and affectations, cliches and trite language serve no real purpose and will obscure your objective.

If you have not written an opening or a closing now is the time. Lead into the acceptance with an affirmative statement regarding your commitment. Conclude with an enthusiastic forward-looking comment.

Acknowledgment Letters

A letter of acknowledgment is both a receipt and a public relations tool. Its objective is to let the reader know that items requested in a prior communication, usually an inquiry or an order letter, have been received.

The scope can actually be quite brief, just enough to complete a business communication cycle. Confirming the day in which an item arrived or expressing some appreciation for having a request satisfied may be all that is necessary.

Remember, it's the thought that counts. An acknowledgment letter is a professional courtesy routinely extended by successful people in the building and maintenance of productive business relationships.

Identify Your Reader

An acknowledgment letter should be addressed to a person who requires a receipt for an item sent. If you do not know the name of the sender, you may find it in the complimentary close of a previous letter; an original inquiry or an order letter, for instance. That name should be placed in the inside heading and the salutation of your acknowledgment. It should also be included on the top line of your envelope.

Remember that people do business with people first, businesses second. When you address your reader by name, you recognize their importance and value as an individual human being.

Establish Your Objective

The objective of an acknowledgment letter is to let the reader know that expected items have, in fact, been received. You should be brief.

In the body the writer should mention a specific point, clarifying for the reader that it is an important part of her overall objective, letting him know that further discussion will be expected in their upcoming meeting.

Determine Your Scope

The scope of an acknowledgment letter can be quite brief, a line or two, the objective of which is to notify the reader that a request has been satisfied. When a continuing dialogue is required, the scope may be broadened to include new information.

In the body the writer should provide the name of her assistant, a second contact person with whom he can speak should she be unavailable to take his call. This establishes a line of communication that indicates her serious interest in exploring a further business relationship.

Organize Your Letter

Organizing your acknowledgment letter will establish a logical order in which to present your information. You have already begun this task by establishing an

objective and determining your scope. Refer back to them. Together they include much of the content that will become the body of your letter.

A simple outline will get you organized. Begin by creating a list of relevant points and place them in the sequential order that will best help your reader. comprehend your acknowledgment. These points will become the backbone of your draft; your outline will become a checklist.

Draft Your Letter

Working from an outline is the simplest way to draft an acknowledgment letter. You have already organized yourself by creating a list. Refer back to it and turn each fragment into a full and complete sentence expressing a single thought or idea.

In order that your thoughts and ideas are conveyed in a cohesive manner, write in as natural a sounding voice as possible. Try writing your draft quickly and then read it out loud. Concentrate on communicating your objective to your reader. Make sure that the scope of your letter contains all the relevant information included in your organizational list.

Keep in mind that you are writing a rough draft. For the moment you can ignore spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence and paragraph structure. Those are technical details that you will pay attention to in the final step when you review and revise your work.

Close Your Letter

An acknowledgment letter should close in a professional manner. Once your last paragraph is written, sign off between a complimentary close such as "Sincerely," or "Thank you," and your printed name.

If you are writing in conjunction with an official duty, place your title below the printed name. Additional information such as dictation remarks, notification of attachments, enclosures and copies sent to other individuals should be placed beneath the title line.

Review and Revise Your acknowledgment Letter

Reviewing and revising your acknowledgment letter is the final step in the writing process. You will check your draft in this step, making sure that your objective is clear and your scope is concise. Put yourself in the reader's shoes as you examine the rough draft. Ask yourself, as the recipient, whether you are able to comprehend the request quickly and if enough information has been included to enable a timely response.

Look for the obvious errors first. Check for spelling, sentence structure and grammar mistakes. Remember that a passive voice is not as commanding as an active one. You want your letter to be strong, so write with an active voice.

The important thing to keep in mind is the overall cohesiveness of the whole unit. Look for accuracy, clarity and a sense of completeness. Ask yourself if the transitions between paragraphs are working and if your point of view, tone and style are consistent throughout the text.

Examine your word choices carefully. Ambiguous words lead to confusion. Jargon and abstract terms may not be understood at all and affectations, cliches and trite language serve no real purpose and will obscure your objective. You want to help your reader understand exactly what it is that you want, so remove all that is not helpful.

And finally, if you have not written an opening or a conclusion now is the time. The introduction needs to lead into the body of your letter with a firm statement about the subject of your acknowledgment and enough supporting information to keep the reader reading. Your closing remarks need to reiterate your objective with a question that calls for an action.

Adjustment Letters

An adjustment letter is a response to a written complaint. The objective is to inform the reader that their complaint has been received. It is also a legal document recording what decisions were made and what actions have or will be taken.

Keep in mind that your reader has been inconvenienced. This is a prime goodwill building opportunity. Everybody makes mistakes and when a business owns up to one it goes along way to renewing the customer's confidence in a continued business relationship.

The scope of your adjustment letter should reiterate the relevant facts of the claim. When the customer is right, include a forthright admission to that effect and extend a sincere apology. When the customer is not right, explain the reasons clearly and with every courtesy.

Counter any negativity that may be in the complaint letter with a positive approach. Be gracious and emphasize the corrective steps being taken. Explanations for why the situation occurred are of less importance than the solution.

Identify Your Reader

An adjustment letter should be addressed to a person who has filed a claim upon which a decision has been made. That person's name will often be found in the complimentary close of a complaint letter and should be placed in the inside heading and the salutation of your adjustment. It should also be included on the top line of your envelope.

Remember that people do business with people first, businesses second. When you address your reader by name, you recognize their individual importance and value as a human being.

Establish Your Objective

The objective of an adjustment letter is to inform the reader that an unsatisfactory situation is being corrected. You should avoid excuses or long explanations about what went wrong. Stick to the facts of the adjustment and your reader will comprehend the corrective action that you are offering or have already implemented.

In the first paragraph, the writer apologizes for an incorrect shipment and clearly

admits that a mistake has been made. He then provides the details of the solution. In the end he does not reiterate his apology. Once said, leave well enough alone and focus on positive actions.

Determine Your Scope

The scope of an adjustment letter should reiterate the relevant facts of a claim, accept responsibility for an error or defect, and offer an apology. It should provide the reader with an exact description, including dates, times and places that corrective actions will take place.

The writer explicitly goes beyond that which was called for in the claim. In an effort to retain goodwill he discounts the original purchase price with a credit to the account of the inconvenienced customer.

Organize Your Letter

Organizing your adjustment letter will establish a logical order in which to present information regarding a corrective action. You have already begun this task by establishing an objective and determining your scope. Refer back to them. Together they include much of the content that will become the body of your letter.

A simple outline will get you organized. Begin by creating a list of points that your letter will address and put them in the sequential order that will best help your reader comprehend your adjustment. These points will become the backbone of your draft; your outline will become a checklist.

Draft Your Letter

Working from an outline is the simplest way to draft a adjustment letter. You have already organized yourself by creating a list. Refer back to it and turn each fragment into a full and complete sentence expressing a single thought or idea.

In order that your thoughts and ideas are conveyed in a cohesive manner, write in as natural a sounding voice as possible. Try writing your draft quickly and then read it out loud. Concentrate on communicating your objective to your reader. Make sure

that the scope of your letter contains all the relevant information included in your organizational list.

Keep in mind that you are writing a rough draft. For the moment you can ignore spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence and paragraph structure. Those are technical details that you will pay attention to in the final step when you review and revise your work.

Close Your Letter

An adjustment letter should close in a professional manner. Once your last paragraph is written, sign off between a complimentary close such as "Sincerely," or "Thank you," and your printed name.

If you are writing in conjunction with an official duty, place your title below the printed name as in the sample adjustment letter. Additional information such as dictation remarks, notification of attachments, enclosures and copies sent to other individuals should be placed beneath your title line.

Review and Revise Your Adjustment Letter

Reviewing and revising the draft of your adjustment letter is a final inspection, a last check to see whether your objective is clearly stated and your scope concisely defined. Put yourself in the reader's shoes and ask whether the details are accurate and complete.

Look for obvious errors. Check for spelling, sentence structure and grammar mistakes. Your complaint should be direct and to the point, so make sure that you have used a strong active voice.

Keep in mind the overall cohesiveness of your letter. Look for accuracy, clarity and a sense of completeness. Ask yourself if the transitions between paragraphs are working and if your point of view, tone and style are consistent throughout the text.

Examine your word choices carefully. Ambiguous words lead to confusion. Jargon and abstract terms may not be understood at all and affectations, cliches and trite

language serve no real purpose and will obscure your objective.

If you have not written an opening or a closing now is the time. The introduction should lead into the letter with a firm statement about the application's status. The conclusion should reiterate your objective and, when appropriate, contain an attractive inducement to a future business transaction.

Application Letters

An application letter is a cover letter, a sales letter, and a marketing tool all in one and it should accompany a professional resume any time a person applies for a job.

Its main objective is to get the applicant in the door for an interview and must be written well enough to attract the attention and interest of the person with the power to recommend or grant one.

The scope should include compelling information that will convince the reader that the qualifications outlined in the resume are strong enough to make an applicant a candidate.

Identify Your Reader

An application letter should be addressed to the person who is in charge of screening and hiring new employees. That person's name should be placed in the inside heading and salutation of your application. It should also be included on the top line of your envelope.

Remember that people do business with people first, businesses second. When you address your reader by name, you recognize their individual importance and value as a human being.

Establish Your Objective

The objective of an application letter is to attract the attention of an employer. It acts as a cover letter for your resume and should provide enough personal information to convince the reader to grant you an interview.

The qualifications you provide a potential employer should be included on your resume. Your cover letter should indicate that you are a suitable candidate and attract attention to your resume.

Determine Your Scope

The scope of your application letter should include those things that are specific to obtaining your objective - convincing the reader to grant you an interview. You should be brief, but include such things as:

- A specific job title
- A desired area of employment
- Source of job lead
- Educational background
- Work experience
- Leadership activities
- Specialized training

Remember, you are requesting an interview. Specify times at which you are available and the methods by which you can be contacted.

Organize Your Letter

Organizing your application letter will establish a logical order in which to present your information. You have already begun this task by establishing an objective and determining your scope. Refer back to them. Together they include much of the content that will become the body of your letter.

A simple outline will get you organized. Begin by creating a list of points that your letter will address and put them in the sequential order that will best help your reader comprehend your application. These points will become the backbone of your draft; your outline will become a checklist.

Draft Your Letter

Working from an outline is the simplest way to draft an application letter. You have already organized yourself by creating a list. Refer back to it and turn each fragment into a full and complete sentence expressing a single thought or idea.

In order that your thoughts and ideas are conveyed in a cohesive manner, write in as natural a sounding voice as possible. Try writing your draft quickly and then read it out loud. Concentrate on communicating your objective to your reader. Make sure that the scope of your letter contains all the relevant information included in your organizational list.

Keep in mind that you are writing a rough draft. For the moment you can ignore spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence and paragraph structure. Those are technical details that you will pay attention to in the final step when you review and revise your work.

Close Your Letter

An application letter should close in a professional manner. Once your last paragraph is written, sign off between a complimentary close such as "Sincerely," or "Thank you," and your printed name.

If you are writing in conjunction with an official duty, place your title below your printed name. Additional information such as dictation remarks, notification of attachments, enclosures and copies sent to other individuals should be placed beneath the title line.

Review and Revise Your Application Letter

Reviewing and revising the draft of your application letter is a final inspection, a last check to see whether your objective is clearly stated and your scope concisely defined. Put yourself in the reader's shoes and ask whether the details are accurate and complete.

Look for obvious errors. Check for spelling, sentence structure and grammar mistakes. Your complaint should be direct and to the point, so make sure that you

have used a strong active voice.

Keep in mind the overall cohesiveness of your letter. Look for accuracy, clarity and a sense of completeness. Ask yourself if the transitions between paragraphs are working and if your point of view, tone and style are consistent throughout the text.

Examine your word choices carefully. Ambiguous words lead to confusion. Jargon and abstract terms may not be understood at all and affectations, cliches and trite language serve no real purpose and will obscure your objective.

If you have not written an opening or a closing now is the time. The introduction should lead into the letter with a firm statement about the position or job you are seeking. The conclusion should provide your contact information.

Complaint Letters

A complaint letter advises the reader of an error in a business transaction or a defect discovered in a consumer product or service. The objective is to provide detailed information regarding the error or defect and to serve as a legal document recording the writer's claim and the corrective action or adjustment being requested.

Keep in mind that your reader is a trained customer service professional and not very likely to be the person responsible for the error or defect. Rather than being angry, use a firm but courteous tone when stating a complaint. Remember, you want results, not a fight.

The scope of a complaint letter should include only those facts that validate your claim and a request that corrective steps be taken. It may also detail the options that you are willing to accept in satisfaction of the claim.

Identify Your Reader

Although a clearly identified reader is not absolutely necessary, a complaint letter should be addressed to the person who is most likely and able to resolve an unsatisfactory situation.

In a very small business the owner is generally the contact person. In a mid-size company a vice president or upper level management person solves problems. In either case place that person's name in the inside heading and the salutation of your complaint letter. Include it also on the top line of your envelope.

Large companies often have a Customer Service department to whose attention a complaint can be addressed. In these cases, the inside heading should contain just the name and address of the company. The salutation will then be replaced by a simple attention getting device.

Establish Your Objective

The objective of a complaint letter is to prompt an action that resolves a conflict. You should avoid threats and accusations when providing the details of your complaint. Stick to the facts and your reader will comprehend what went wrong and what action you expect them to take.

Determine Your Scope

The scope of a complaint letter should encompass the relevant information necessary to resolve a problem, correct an error or repair a defect. It should provide the reader with exact descriptions, including dates, times and places. It should reference purchase orders, invoice numbers, payment records and even dollar amounts when appropriate.

Organize Your Letter

Organizing your complaint letter will establish a logical order in which to present your information. You have already begun this task by establishing an objective and determining your scope. Refer back to them. Together they include much of the content that will become the body of your letter.

A simple outline will get you organized. Begin by creating a list of points that your letter will address and put them in the sequential order that will best help your reader comprehend your complaint. These points will become the backbone of your draft; your outline will become a checklist.

Draft Your Letter

Working from an outline is the simplest way to draft a complaint letter. You have already organized yourself by creating a list. Refer back to it and turn each fragment into a full and complete sentence expressing a single thought or idea.

In order that your thoughts and ideas are conveyed in a cohesive manner, write in as natural a sounding voice as possible. Try writing your draft quickly and then read it out loud. Concentrate on communicating your objective to your reader. Make sure that the scope of your letter contains all the relevant information included in your organizational list.

Keep in mind that you are writing a rough draft. For the moment you can ignore spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence and paragraph structure. Those are technical details that you will pay attention to in the final step when you review and revise your work.

Close Your Letter

A complaint letter should close in a professional manner. Once your last paragraph is written, sign off between a complimentary close such as "Sincerely," or "Thank you," and your printed name.

If you are writing in conjunction with an official duty, place your title below the printed name. Additional information such as dictation remarks, notification of attachments, enclosures and copies sent to other individuals should be placed beneath the title line.

Review and Revise Your Complaint Letter

Reviewing and revising your complaint letter is the final step in the writing process. You will check your draft in this step, making sure that your objective is clear and your scope is concise. Put yourself in the reader's shoes as you examine the rough draft. Ask yourself, as the recipient, whether you are able to comprehend the request quickly and if enough information has been included to enable a timely response.

Look for the obvious errors first. Check for spelling, sentence structure and grammar mistakes. Remember that a passive voice is not as commanding as an active one. You want your letter to be strong, so write with an active voice.

Keep in mind is the overall cohesiveness of the whole unit. Look for accuracy, clarity and a sense of completeness. Ask yourself if the transitions between paragraphs are working and if your point of view, tone and style are consistent throughout the text.

Examine your word choices carefully. Ambiguous words lead to confusion. Jargon and abstract terms may not be understood at all and affectations, cliches and trite language serve no real purpose and will obscure your objective. You want to help your reader understand exactly what it is that you want, so remove all that is not helpful.

And finally, if you have not written an opening or a conclusion now is the time. The introduction needs to lead into the body of your letter with a firm statement about the subject of your complaint and enough supporting information to keep the reader reading. Your closing remarks need to reiterate your objective with a question that calls for an action.

Cover Letters

A cover letter accompanies items or documents enclosed or shipped in a single package. The objective is to identify each of the items that are included and provide a paper trail for both the sender and the receiver.

The scope should be limited to only that information that will help the reader recognize the contents of the package and the reasons for receiving them.

Identify Your Reader

A cover letter should be addressed to a person receiving correspondence or a package in which a number of items have been included. That person's name should be placed in the inside heading and salutation of your cover letter. It should

also be included on the top line of your envelope.

Remember that people do business with people first, businesses second. When you address your reader by name, you recognize their importance and value as an individual human being.

Establish Your Objective

The objective of a cover letter is to identify and explain its contents. It will provide the reader a record of the items and documents sent.

As such it should be specific and brief. If you are sending multiple pieces of information, a bulleted list will effectively highlight the contents of your package.

Determine Your Scope

The scope of a cover letter will contain a brief description of the items included in a package. Its objective is to help your reader identify those items and why they are being sent.

Organize Your Letter

Organizing your cover letter will establish a logical order in which to present your information. You have already begun this task by establishing an objective and determining your scope. Refer back to them. Together they include much of the content that will become the body of your letter.

A simple outline will get you organized. Begin by creating a list of items that your package will include and put them in the sequential order that will best help your reader comprehend the contents of your package. These points will become the backbone of your draft; your outline will become a checklist.

Draft Your Letter

Working from an outline is the simplest way to draft a cover letter. You have already organized yourself by creating a list. Refer back to it and turn each fragment into a full and complete sentence expressing a single thought or idea

In order that your thoughts and ideas are conveyed in a cohesive manner, write in as natural a sounding voice as possible. Try writing your draft quickly and then read it out loud. Concentrate on communicating your objective to your reader. Make sure that the scope of your letter contains all the relevant information included in your organizational list.

Keep in mind that you are writing a rough draft. For the moment you can ignore spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence and paragraph structure. Those are technical details that you will pay attention to in the final step when you review and revise your work.

Close Your Letter

A cover letter should close in a professional manner. Once your last paragraph is written, sign off between a complimentary close such as "Sincerely," or "Thank you," and your printed name.

If you are writing in conjunction with an official duty, place your title below your printed name. Additional information such as dictation remarks, notification of attachments, enclosures and copies sent to other individuals should be placed beneath the title line.

Review and Revise Your Cover Letter

Reviewing and revising the draft of your cover letter is a final inspection, a last check to see whether your objective is clearly stated and your scope concisely defined. Put yourself in the reader's shoes and ask whether the details are accurate and complete.

Look for obvious errors. Check for spelling, sentence structure and grammar mistakes. Your complaint should be direct and to the point, so make sure that you have used a strong active voice.

Keep in mind the overall cohesiveness of your letter. Look for accuracy, clarity and a sense of completeness. Ask yourself if the transitions between paragraphs are

working and if your point of view, tone and style are consistent throughout the text.

Examine your word choices carefully. Ambiguous words lead to confusion. Jargon and abstract terms may not be understood at all and affectations, cliches and trite language serve no real purpose and will obscure your objective.

If you have not written an opening or a closing now is the time. The introduction should lead into the letter with a firm statement about the application's status. The conclusion should reiterate your objective and, when appropriate, contain an attractive inducement to a future business transaction.

Credit Letters

A credit letter is a response to customer's application for credit. The objective is to inform the customer of the status of that application. It also serves as a legal document notifying the recipient of the results of a credit check.

This is an extremely sensitive subject. Keep in mind that your response is a judgment regarding the applicant's personal credibility. Your reader deserves a direct and forthright decision and will appreciate a tactful and courteous tone.

The scope of a credit letter should include only those details that reflect the outcome of the credit checking process. The information presented will vary depending on the decision being made.

Whether your letter grants or denies credit, this is an opportunity to build goodwill. Keep in mind that a person with less than a desirable credit rating may still be a good cash customer and may in time become a better credit risk.

Identify Your Reader

A credit letter should be addressed to a person who wishes to open a charge account. That person's name will be found at the beginning of a previously submitted credit application and should be placed in the inside heading and the salutation of your credit letter. It should also be included on the top line of your envelope.

Remember that people do business with people first, businesses second. When you address your reader by name, you recognize their individual importance and value as a human being.

Establish Your Objective

The objective of a credit letter is to inform the reader of an approval or denial of a request for credit. Notification of an approval is always easy. Be warm and welcoming in your tone and style. Refusing an application is a more delicate matter. You should avoid being apologetic, however; remember, credibility is the applicant's personal responsibility, not yours.

To help your reader comprehend your decision, be brief and to the point. If you are not extending credit, use your first paragraphs to explain the factors or criteria used to judge the application and explain which of those factors did not meet an acceptable standard.

Determine Your Scope

The scope of your credit letter will be determined by the decision to extend or deny the application. Use a welcoming tone when granting credit and take the time to explain the limits, terms and conditions. Your reader will need to know a few things:

- How much credit is being granted?
- What interest rate is being applied?
- What payment options are available?
- What penalty stipulations are attached?

Enclosing a company brochure is a common method for explaining these details.

Organize Your Letter

Organizing your credit letter will establish a logical order in which to present your information. You have already begun this task by establishing an objective and determining your scope. Refer back to them. Together they include much of the content that will become the body of your letter.

A simple outline will get you organized. Begin by creating a list of points that your letter will address and put them in the sequential order that will best help your reader comprehend your credit decision. These points will become the backbone of your draft; your outline will become a checklist.

Draft Your Letter

Working from an outline is the simplest way to draft a credit letter. You have already organized yourself by creating a list. Refer back to it and turn each fragment into a full and complete sentence expressing a single thought or idea.

In order that your thoughts and ideas are conveyed in a cohesive manner, write in as natural a sounding voice as possible. Try writing your draft quickly and then read it out loud. Concentrate on communicating your objective to your reader. Make sure that the scope of your letter contains all the relevant information included in your organizational list.

Keep in mind that you are writing a rough draft. For the moment you can ignore spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence and paragraph structure. Those are technical details that you will pay attention to in the final step when you review and revise your work.

Close Your Letter

A credit letter should close in a professional manner. Once your last paragraph is written, sign off between a complimentary close such as "Sincerely," or "Thank you," and your printed name.

If you are writing in conjunction with an official duty, place your title below your printed name. Additional information such as dictation remarks, notification of attachments, enclosures and copies sent to other individuals should be placed beneath your title line.

Review and Revise Your Credit Letter

Reviewing and revising the draft of your credit letter is a final inspection, a last check to see whether your objective is clearly stated and your scope concisely defined. Put yourself in the reader's shoes and ask whether the details are accurate and complete.

Look for obvious errors. Check for spelling, sentence structure and grammar mistakes. Your complaint should be direct and to the point, so make sure that you have used a strong active voice.

Keep in mind the overall cohesiveness of your letter. Look for accuracy, clarity and a sense of completeness. Ask yourself if the transitions between paragraphs are working and if your point of view, tone and style are consistent throughout the text.

Examine your word choices carefully. Ambiguous words lead to confusion. Jargon and abstract terms may not be understood at all and affectations, cliches and trite language serve no real purpose and will obscure your objective.

If you have not written an opening or a closing now is the time. The introduction should lead into the letter with a firm statement about the application's status. The conclusion should reiterate your objective and, when appropriate, contain an attractive inducement to a future business transaction.

If you have not written an opening or a closing now is the time. The introduction should lead into the letter with a firm statement about the application's status. The conclusion should reiterate the objective and, when appropriate, contain an attractive inducement to a continuing business relationship.

Inquiry Letters

A letter of inquiry is a request for information that the writer believes the reader can provide. Regardless of its subject, the objective is to get the reader to respond with an action that satisfies the inquiry.

The action taken can benefit either the writer or the reader, and sometimes both. That being the case, the scope must include enough information to help the reader determine how best to respond.

Identify Your Reader

An inquiry letter should be addressed to the person who is most likely to respond in a positive and helpful manner. If you are unsure of who that might be, try making a few phone calls to identify a contact person. That person's name should be placed in the inside heading and the salutation of your inquiry. It should also be included on the top line of your envelope.

Remember that people do business with people first, businesses second. When you address your reader by name, you recognize their importance and value as an individual human being.

Establish Your Objective

The objective in an inquiry letter is to make a request. It will either ask the reader to provide something beneficial to the writer, or take advantage of something the writer has to offer.

Your inquiry should be specific and brief. If you are asking more than one question you might consider highlighting them in a bulleted list.

Determine Your Scope

The scope of an inquiry letter should provide enough information for the reader grasp your objective, make an informed decision and respond in a timely manner.

Consider your reader and get to the point. Do they have what you want? Can they do what you ask? Think about what your reader will need to know in order before making a decision and sending you a response.

If you are to receive some benefit, it may help to explain for what purpose the benefit will be used. If the reader is to receive some benefit, it may help to offer an incentive to respond.

Organize Your Letter

Organizing your inquiry letter will establish a logical order in which to present your information. You have already begun this task by establishing an objective and determining your scope. Refer back to them. Together they include much of the content that will become the body of your letter.

A simple outline will get you organized. Begin by creating a list of relevant points and place them in the sequential order that will best help your reader comprehend your inquiry. These points will become the backbone of your draft; your outline will become a checklist.

Draft Your Letter

Working from an outline is the simplest way to draft an inquiry letter. You have already organized yourself by creating a list. Refer back to it and turn each fragment into a full and complete sentence expressing a single thought or idea.

In order that your thoughts and ideas are conveyed in a cohesive manner, write in as natural a sounding voice as possible. Try writing your draft quickly and then read it out loud. Concentrate on communicating your objective to your reader. Make sure that the scope of your letter contains all the relevant information included in your organizational list.

Keep in mind that you are writing a rough draft. For the moment you can ignore spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence and paragraph structure. Those are technical details that you will pay attention to in the final step when you review and revise your work.

Close Your Letter

An inquiry letter should close in a professional manner. Once your last paragraph is written, sign off between a complimentary close such as "Sincerely," or "Thank you," and your printed name.

If you are writing in conjunction with an official duty, place your title below the printed name. Additional information such as dictation remarks, notification of attachments, enclosures and copies sent to other individuals should be placed beneath the title line.

Review and Revise Your Inquiry Letter

Reviewing and revising your inquiry letter is the final step in the writing process. You will check your draft in this step, making sure that your objective is clear and your scope is concise. Put yourself in the reader's shoes as you examine the rough draft. Ask yourself, as the recipient, whether you are able to comprehend the request quickly and if enough information has been included to enable a timely response.

Look for the obvious errors first. Check for spelling, sentence structure and grammar mistakes. Remember that a passive voice is not as commanding as an active one. You want your inquiry to be strong, so write with an active voice.

The important thing to keep in mind is the overall cohesiveness of the whole unit. Look for accuracy, clarity and a sense of completeness. Ask yourself if the transitions between paragraphs are working and if your point of view, tone and style are consistent throughout the text.

Examine your word choices carefully. Ambiguous words lead to confusion. Jargon and abstract terms may not be understood at all and affectations, cliches and trite language serve no real purpose and will obscure your objective. You want to help your reader understand exactly what it is that you want, so remove all that is not helpful.

And finally, if you have not written an opening or a conclusion now is the time. The

introduction needs to lead into the body of your letter with a firm statement about the subject of your inquiry and enough supporting information to keep the reader reading. Your closing remarks need to reiterate your objective with a question that calls for an action.

Order Letters

An order letter, also known as a purchase order or PO, begins the paper trail of a specific purchase. The objective is to provide the vendor with detailed instructions for fulfilling an order. It also serves as a legal record of the transaction and, consequently, should be written with care.

Your intentions need to be clear and concise. Attention to detail is crucial. The reader will fill your order only according to your instructions; your satisfaction will depend largely upon their accuracy.

The scope should include only the information needed to fulfill the order. The vendor does not need to know why you are placing the order, what it is going to be used for or for whom it is intended. The vendor only needs to know when you expect delivery and how you intend to pay the bill.

Identify Your Reader

An order letter does not necessarily need a clearly identified reader. In fact, most first-time and one-time-only orders are simply addressed to the attention of a sales department.

In such cases, the inside heading of the letter will contain just the name and address of the company to whom the order is being sent, and the salutation will be replaced by a simple attention getting device.

Establishing an account with a company will announce that your intention is to have an ongoing business relationship. At that time you will be assigned a specific contact person, to whom all future orders can be directed.

Establish Your Objective

The objective of an order letter is to clearly indicate to the recipient that you are making a purchase. You should be brief.

Determine Your Scope

The scope of an order letter should provide only that information relevant to accomplishing the objective of making a purchase: what the item is, the terms of the purchase and any specific shipping instructions. It provides the reader with an exact description of what is expected.

Organize Your Letter

Organizing your order letter will establish a logical order in which to present your information. You have already begun this task by establishing an objective and determining your scope. Refer back to them. Together they include much of the content that will become the body of your letter.

A simple outline will get you organized. Begin by creating a list of points that your letter will address and put them in the sequential order that will best help your reader comprehend your order. These points will become the backbone of your draft; your outline will become a checklist.

Draft Your Letter

Working from an outline is the simplest way to draft an order letter. You have already organized yourself by creating a list. Refer back to it and turn each fragment into a full and complete sentence expressing a single thought or idea.

In order that your thoughts and ideas are conveyed in a cohesive manner, write in as natural a sounding voice as possible. Try writing your draft quickly and then read it out loud. Concentrate on communicating your objective to your reader. Make sure that the scope of your letter contains all the relevant information included in your organizational list.

Keep in mind that you are writing a rough draft. For the moment you can ignore spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence and paragraph structure. Those are

technical details that you will pay attention to in the final step when you review and revise your work.

Close Your Letter

An order letter should close in a professional manner. Once your last paragraph is written, sign off between a complimentary close such as "Sincerely," or "Thank you," and your printed name.

If you are writing in conjunction with an official duty, place your title below the printed name. Additional information such as dictation remarks, notification of attachments, enclosures and copies sent to other individuals should be placed beneath the title line.

Review and Revise Your Order Letter

Reviewing and revising your order letter is the final step in the writing process. You will check your draft in this step, making sure that your objective is clear and your scope is concise. Put yourself in the reader's shoes as you examine the rough draft. Ask yourself, as the recipient, whether you are able to comprehend the request quickly and if enough information has been included to enable a timely response.

Look for the obvious errors first. Check for spelling, sentence structure and grammar mistakes. Remember that a passive voice is not as commanding as an active one. You want your order to be strong, so write with an active voice.

The important thing to keep in mind is the overall cohesiveness of the whole unit. Look for accuracy, clarity and a sense of completeness. Ask yourself if the transitions between paragraphs are working and if your point of view, tone and style are consistent throughout the text.

Examine your word choices carefully. Ambiguous words lead to confusion. Jargon and abstract terms may not be understood at all and affectations, cliches and trite language serve no real purpose and will obscure your objective. You want to help your reader understand exactly what it is that you want, so remove all that is not

helpful.

And finally, if you have not written an opening or a conclusion now is the time. The introduction should lead into the letter with a firm statement about the details of your order. The conclusion should reiterate your objective and, when appropriate, contain any explicit instructions.

Refusal Letters

A refusal letter is a negative response to either an invitation or a job offer. Its objective is to notify the reader of a decision to decline. The letter should be kept fairly short. Its scope need only include information that relates to the reasons for not accepting the offer.

If you have been offered a job that you do not intend to accept, write your letter immediately. Remember, you are not the only person that was interviewed. The offer indicates that you are the employer's "first choice." Your prospective employer deserves to be informed of your decision without delay so that an offer can be made to his or her second choice.

Identify Your Reader

A refusal letter should be addressed to a person who has extended an invitation or a job offer that you are either unable or unwilling to accept. You will have most likely met this person during a previous job interview and should place his or her name in the salutation and the inside heading of your reply. It should also be included on the top line of your envelope.

Keep in mind that people do business with people. When you personalize your letter, addressing the reader by name, you recognize that person's individual importance and their value as a human being.

Establish Your Objective

The objective of a refusal letter is to say "no" to either an invitation or a job offer. It notifies the reader of this decision and provides the reason why it is being declined.

Your refusal should begin with a genuine appreciation for the opportunity that was offered. Include a simple "thank you" as you begin your letter. Courtesy never goes out of style and your reader will appreciate your attention in that regard.

Determine Your Scope

The scope of your refusal should be brief and upbeat, explaining the reasons that prevent you from accepting the invitation or offer. In refusing a job offer, restate the title of the position. Doing so reaffirms the essential details of the offer being declined and ensures that your objective is understood.

Inform your reader of the reason(s) why you are declining. Be forthright with the potential employer. Perhaps another company offered a better benefits package or an unexpected opportunity you've been waiting for finally became available.

You are not the first person to decline a job offer; treat it as an opportunity to build good will. After all, you don't know what the future holds. One day you may find yourself knocking on the same door again.

Organize Your Letter

Organizing your refusal letter before you begin to write it will establish a logical order in which to present your information. You have already begun this task by establishing an objective and determining your scope. Refer back to them. Together they include much of the content that will become the body of your letter.

A simple outline will get you organized. Begin by creating a list of relevant points and place them in the sequential order that will best help your reader comprehend your refusal. These points will become the backbone of your working draft.

Draft Your Letter

Working from an outline is the simplest way to draft an refusal letter. You organized yourself by creating a list. Refer back to it and turn each fragment into a full and complete sentence expressing a single thought or idea

In order that your thoughts and ideas are conveyed in a cohesive manner, write in as natural a sounding voice as possible. Try writing your draft quickly and then read it out loud. Concentrate on communicating your objective to your reader. Make sure that the scope of your letter contains all the relevant information included in your organizational list.

Keep in mind that you are writing a rough draft. For the moment you can ignore spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence and paragraph structure. Those are technical details that you will pay attention to in the final step when you review and revise your work.

Close Your Letter

A refusal letter should close in a professional manner. Once your last paragraph is written, sign off between a complimentary close such as "Sincerely," or "Thank you," and your printed name.

If you are writing in conjunction with an official duty, place your title below your printed name. Additional information such as dictation remarks, notification of attachments, enclosures and copies sent to other individuals should be placed beneath the title line.

Review and Revise Your Refusal Letter

Reviewing and revising the draft of your refusal letter is a final inspection, a last check to see whether your objective is clearly stated and your scope concisely defined. Put yourself in the reader's shoes and ask whether the details are accurate and complete.

Look for obvious errors. Check for spelling, sentence structure and grammar mistakes. Your complaint should be direct and to the point, so make sure that you have used a strong active voice.

Keep in mind the overall cohesiveness of your letter. Look for accuracy, clarity and a sense of completeness. Ask yourself if the transitions between paragraphs are

working and if your point of view, tone and style are consistent throughout the text.

Examine your word choices carefully. Ambiguous words lead to confusion. Jargon and abstract terms may not be understood at all and affectations, cliches and trite language serve no real purpose and will obscure your objective.

If you have not written an opening or a closing now is the time. Lead into the refusal with an appreciative statement and a positively worded observation. Conclude with a gracious reiteration of your appreciation.

Response Letters

A response letter provides the answers or information requested in a letter of inquiry. The objective is to satisfy the reader with an action that fulfills their request.

If you have neither the information requested nor the authority to reply, forward the inquiry on to the correct person. If you are the correct person, be prompt with your reply. Address every question courteously, even those that do not seem relevant.

Take into account that your reader may lack your expertise. Keep your response on point and avoid going beyond the scope of the reader's request.

When responding to a forwarded letter inform your reader in your opening paragraph that you are the correct contact person for all future communications. In your closing paragraph, express your willingness to be of further assistance.

Identify Your Reader

A response letter should be addressed to a person from whom a request or inquiry has been received. That person's name will be found in the complimentary close of a previous inquiry letter and should be placed in the inside heading and the salutation of your response. It should also be included on the top line of your envelope.

Remember that people do business with people first, businesses second. When you address your reader by name, you recognize their importance and value as an individual human being.

Establish Your Objective

The objective of a response letter is to satisfy the reader with an answer or action that fulfills the request of an inquiry. The answer either informs the reader of the respondent's ability to provide information or of a willingness to act on their behalf in some other way.

Your answers should be specific and brief. If you are replying to multiple questions you might consider placing your answers in a bulleted list. Items on a list highlight the components of your response, like snapshots in a photo album.

Determine Your Scope

The scope of a response letter is contained in the information you provide for the specific purpose of helping the reader grasp your objective. You may safely assume that your reader is a busy person, so getting to the point is important. Your goal is to have the reader make a decision quickly and respond in a timely manner. Information that is not related to your objective should be left out.

Consider your targeted reader. Make it your business to know something about that person. What is their title or position? Are they the president of the company or the shipping clerk? Do they have what you want? Can they do what you ask?

Give them the relevant background information needed in order to make an informed decision. Let the reader know who you are and something about your motive. If you are to receive some benefit, it may help to explain for what purpose the benefit will be used. If the reader is to receive some benefit, it may help to offer an incentive to respond.

Put yourself in the reader's shoes and ask yourself what and how much background information is needed in order to take the action you are requesting. Would you already know everything you need to know, or would you need a little

more? While you are in their shoes you might also ask yourself how much persuasion you would need in order to be moved to act.

This will help you determine whether you have supplied too much information, or not enough. It will also help you determine what information needs to be qualified or amplified for the reader's benefit.

Organize Your Letter

Organizing your response letter will establish a logical order in which to present your information. You have already begun this task by establishing an objective and determining your scope. Refer back to them. Together they include much of the content that will become the body of your letter.

A simple outline will get you organized. Begin by creating a list of points that your letter will address and put them in the sequential order that will best help your reader comprehend your response. These points will become the backbone of your draft; your outline will become a checklist.

Draft Your Letter

Working from an outline is the simplest way to draft a response letter. You have already organized yourself by creating a list. Refer back to it and turn each fragment into a full and complete sentence expressing a single thought or idea.

In order that your thoughts and ideas are conveyed in a cohesive manner, write in as natural a sounding voice as possible. Try writing your draft quickly and then read it out loud. Concentrate on communicating your objective to your reader. Make sure that the scope of your letter contains all the relevant information included in your organizational list.

Keep in mind that you are writing a rough draft. For the moment you can ignore spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence and paragraph structure. Those are technical details that you will pay attention to in the final step when you review and revise your work.

Close Your Letter

A response letter should close in a professional manner. Once your last paragraph is written, sign off between a complimentary close such as "Sincerely," or "Thank you," and your printed name.

If you are writing in conjunction with an official duty, place your title below the printed name. Additional information such as dictation remarks, notification of attachments, enclosures and copies sent to other individuals should be placed beneath the title line.

Review and Revise Your Response Letter

Reviewing and revising your response letter is the final step in the writing process. You will check your draft in this step, making sure that your objective is clear and your scope is concise. Put yourself in the reader's shoes as you examine the rough draft. Ask yourself, as the recipient, whether you are able to comprehend the request quickly and if enough information has been included to enable a timely response.

Look for the obvious errors first. Check for spelling, sentence structure and grammar mistakes. Remember that a passive voice is not as commanding as an active one. You want your letter to be strong, so write with an active voice.

The important thing to keep in mind is the overall cohesiveness of the whole unit. Look for accuracy, clarity and a sense of completeness. Ask yourself if the transitions between paragraphs are working and if your point of view, tone and style are consistent throughout the text.

Examine your word choices carefully. Ambiguous words lead to confusion. Jargon and abstract terms may not be understood at all and affectations, cliches and trite language serve no real purpose and will obscure your objective. You want to help your reader understand exactly what it is that you want, so remove all that is not helpful.

And finally, if you have not written an opening or a conclusion now is the time. The

introduction needs to lead into the body of your letter with a firm statement about the subject of your response and enough supporting information to keep the reader reading. Your closing remarks need to reiterate your objective with a question that calls for an action.

Sales Letters

A sales letter is a marketing tool that promotes a good or service. Its objective is to persuade the reader to buy what the letter offers. To be effective, its scope must describe a particular benefit the reader will gain by making the purchase, such as a problem solved or a need fulfilled.

Before you begin, you should be familiar with what your sales letter intends to promote and the people you intend it to reach. This may require a little research and some brainstorming, but without preparation your sales letter will be less effective.

Then decide on the features that best highlight the good or service; identify its selling points, in other words. Bigger, brighter, stronger, faster, cheaper, etc., are common selling points when writing a sales letter.

Once you have made a selection, you must persuade the readers that the benefit of your offer outweighs the cost. In other words, convince them that what you have to offer is a good deal.

In the sample sales letter the writer promotes a service performing a time-consuming task that few people like to do.

Identify Your Reader

A sales letter should be addressed to a group of prospective buyers who meet an established set of criteria. Selecting their names should be done carefully, ideally with the help of a professional who specializes in direct mail marketing. He or she will be able to assist you in constructing a mailing list tailored to your specific needs.

Once assembled, the names of your potential customers should be placed in the

salutation and inside heading of your sales letter. They should also be included on the top line of your envelope.

Whether you are singling out homeowners or renters, students or working people, dentists or lawyers you are singling out a group of people with an identifiable need or desire, one that you can fulfill or satisfy in some way. This group is your target audience. Each member is a potential customer.

Keep in mind that people do business with people. When you personalize your sales letter, addressing the reader by name, you recognize that person's individual importance and their value as a human being.

Establish Your Objective

The objective of a sales letter is threefold:

1. To attract attention
2. Generate interest
3. Induce a purchase

Your sales letter may not induce an immediate purchase, however, it should, at the very least, meet the first two objectives. It should provide its readers with enough information to heighten their brand awareness about who you are and what goods or services you have to offer. They may return as a customer in the future.

After all, on the day that your direct mail piece arrives, the targeted reader may neither need nor want what you have to offer. Regardless, your sales letter can have a positive residual effect if it succeeds in creating a strong and favorable impression at the time it is received.

Determine Your Scope

To be effective, the scope of a sales letter must identify one or more of the following:

- A problem that can be solved
- A need that can be fulfilled
- A desire that can be satisfied

- A pleasure that can be gained

It must then present an attractive solution in a manner persuasive enough to accomplish the objective of the letter, convincing the reader to make a purchase.

Successful sales letters gear their pitch toward the benefit received by the reader rather than the actual goods or services being offered.

Organize Your Letter

Organizing your sales letter will establish a logical order in which to present your information. You have already begun this task by establishing an objective and determining your scope. Refer back to them. Together they include much of the content that will become the body of your letter.

A simple outline will get you organized. Begin by creating a list of items that your package will include and put them in the sequential order that will best help your reader comprehend the contents of your package. These points will become the backbone of your draft; your outline will become a checklist.

Draft Your Letter

Working from an outline is the simplest way to draft a sales letter. You have already organized yourself by creating a list. Refer back to it and turn each fragment into a full and complete sentence expressing a single thought or idea

In order that your thoughts and ideas are conveyed in a cohesive manner, write in as natural a sounding voice as possible. Try writing your draft quickly and then read it out loud. Concentrate on communicating your objective to your reader. Make sure that the scope of your letter contains all the relevant information included in your organizational list.

Keep in mind that you are writing a rough draft. For the moment you can ignore spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence and paragraph structure. Those are technical details that you will pay attention to in the final step when you review and revise your work.

Close Your Letter

A sales letter should close in a professional manner. Once your last paragraph is written, sign off between a complimentary close such as "Sincerely," or "Thank you," and your printed name.

If you are writing in conjunction with an official duty, place your title below your printed name. Additional information such as dictation remarks, notification of attachments, enclosures and copies sent to other individuals should be placed beneath the title line.

Review and Revise Your Sales Letter

Reviewing and revising the draft of your sales letter is when you inspect and hone its textual content. It is a final check to see that your objective is clearly stated, your scope is sufficient, and the reader has been provided enough information to understand your message.

Look for obvious errors. Check for misspelled words, poor sentence structure, and grammar mistakes. Make sure that you have been direct and to the point. Use a strong active voice.

Keep in mind the overall cohesiveness of your letter. Look for accuracy, clarity, and a sense of completeness. Ask yourself if the transitions between paragraphs are working and if your point of view, tone, and style are consistent throughout the text.

Examine your word choices carefully. Ambiguous words lead to confusion. Jargon and abstract terms may not be understood at all and affectations, cliches, and trite language tend to diminish the substance of your message.

If you have not written an opening or a closing now is the time. Lead into the sales letter with a strong attention getter. Conclude with an inducement to act.

Formatting Business Letters

When business letters are written on company letterhead stationery, they are generally formatted in a **full block style** with each part of the letter justified to the left margin.

Letters not on company letterhead stationery are written in a **modified block style** with the heading, date and complimentary close left justified to the center line and the inside address, salutation and body justified to the left margin.

When a business letter requires more than one page, the **secondary pages** should have a header that includes the recipient's name, the page number and the date.

Elements of a Business Letter

The elements of a business letter are:

- the heading
- the date
- the inside address
- the salutation
- the body
- and the complimentary close
- an additional notation section often follows the close

Heading

- The heading is also the return address to which the recipient will refer when sending a response.
- The writer's name is not included in the heading, as it appears in the complimentary close at the end of the letter. It should include only the street, city, state and zip code of the letter writer. Identifying words such as Avenue, Circle, Court, Drive, and Street should be spelled out rather than abbreviated. Doing so reduces the chances of a response being sent to an incorrect address.
- The state name can be either spelled out or abbreviated in upper case letters according to U.S. Postal Service guidelines.

- The date a letter is written should be placed below the writer's return address information. It is the final component in the heading of a business letter.

The Inside Address

- The inside address contains the mailing information belonging to the recipient and should be justified to the left margin of the letter and placed two spaces below the date (for very short letters four spaces is acceptable).
- As in the heading, the inside address includes the street, city, state and zip code of the recipient, all of which should be placed below the name of the business or organization to whom the letter is being written. Identifying words such as Avenue, Circle, Court, Drive, and Street should be spelled out rather than abbreviated.
- When the recipient's name, title and position are known, they should be included as the first two lines in the inside address and placed directly above the name of the business or organization.

The Salutation

- The salutation is a greeting. Its placement belongs two spaces below the inside address and always justified to the left margin of the letter. It should include the title and full name of the recipient, followed by a colon.
- Customarily the salutation begins with *Dear*, followed by a title such as *Mr.*, *Ms.*, *Mrs.*, however, when the writer is on a first name basis with the recipient, that formality can be dropped in favor of a first name.
- The titles *Mr.*, *Ms.*, *Mrs.*, and *Dr.* are always abbreviated. Other titles, such as Professor and Senator are never abbreviated. Regardless of marital status women should always be addressed as *Ms.*-the only exception being when the recipient has personally expressed a desire to be addressed otherwise (*Miss* or *Mrs.*).
- Avoid gender-based salutations when it is not known if the recipient is a man or a woman. *Dear Student: Dear Customer: Dear Resident:* etc. are perfectly acceptable options for gender-neutral correspondence.

- An impersonal device may be preferable when addressing a letter to a large organization where the recipient's name is not likely to be known. For example, Attention: Accounts Receivable or Subject: Billing Error may replace more familiar forms of greeting.
- The salutation, *To Whom It May Concern:* is very out of date-very 20th Century.

The Body

- Begin the body of a business letter two spaces below the salutation or attention-getting device. Each paragraph should be single-spaced and justified to the left margin of the page with a double space separating each paragraph.
- It is acceptable to double space the text of a letter when the body is very short. This is done purely for cosmetic reasons, giving the letter a more visually balanced appearance on the page. In such instances it is appropriate to indent the first line of each paragraph.

The Complimentary Close

- The complimentary close is placed two spaces below the last line of a letter's body.
- Customary expressions used to close a formal business letter include *Thank you*, *Sincerely*, *Sincerely yours*, and *Yours truly*. Less formal expressions such as *Regards*, *Best regards*, and *Best wishes* should be used only when the writer is addressing a business associate that is also a friend.
- When the expression contains two words, such as *Thank you*, only the first word receives an initial upper case letter
- A comma follows all forms of a complimentary close.
- Allow four spaces between the complimentary close and the typed version of the writer's full name. The space between is reserved for a handwritten signature. The writer's job position or title should appear directly below his or her name.

- The writer's signature should be identical to the printed version except in those situations where the recipient is also a friend, in which case a first name only is fine.

The Additional Notation

A number of situations call for a business letter to be marked with notations signifying those situations. These notations should be placed two spaces below the position or title line following the writer's printed signature.

When a letter references one or more documents that are enclosed by the writer for the recipient, the enclosure is noted in one of the following ways:

- Enclosure: Wholesale Pricing Packet
- Enclosures (5)
- Enc. (Encs.)

When a letter has been dictated to an assistant it should be initialed. Both writer and assistant are acknowledged with their personal initials. The writer's will appear in uppercase letters and the assistant's will appear in lowercase letters in one of the following ways:

- EIB: pjc
- IMK/pjc

When copies of a letter are sent to named business associates or other interested parties, the copy recipients are acknowledged with their full name as in the following example.

- cc: Ms. Annie Getz
- cc: Mr. Glenn Widget, Ms. Ida Mae Knott

Citation: Please adapt for your documentation style.

Connor, Peter. (2009). Business Letters. *Writing@CSU*. Colorado State University.
<https://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=71>

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