

FORMAL LETTER: LAYOUT, PARTS, VOCABULARY

A] The following sentences are all part of a formal business letter – however, there are many mistakes in almost all of them. Read them carefully and i) correct all mistakes, ii) put them in the correct order (they are in a jumbled form) and iii) produce a formal business letter adopting the appropriate layout, using the space provided below.

- 11/03/2022: _____
- Yours faithfully: _____
- Dear Mr. Brown: _____
- enclosure - price list: _____
- Levin Shoes Ltd, 10 willow street Canterbury: _____
- MG/ws: _____
- Thank you for your letter: _____
- c.c Mrs Kelly Norman: _____
- Re / Summer shoes catalogue and price list: _____
- of 20 February asking for details and prices of “Levin Summer Shoes” collection: _____
- Gordon Mary, Sales manager: _____
- Kent SR3 2PX: _____
- Telephone / +44(0)1303 485224: _____
- email / mgordon@levinshoes.com : _____
- We trust that our quality and prices are: _____
- As you will notice our shoes are superior to any other on the market and our prices highly competitive: _____
- Major’s Department store: _____
- Attention / Mr John Collins/for the attention of the Sales Manager: _____
- We must also point out that many orders have been received even at this time of the year and, if you wish to ensure delivery by the end of April, you must place your order now: __
- Earlham 23 road: _____
- London WE51DR: _____

- v. Reference number
- vi. Salutation
- vii. Subject line or heading
- viii. Main body
- ix. Closing sentence
- x. Signature

B] Look again at the business letter you re-ordered in Task A – can you identify the main parts of that specific letter (it is not necessary to have all of them, though)?

- i. Company letterhead / Sender's address: _____
- ii. Date: _____
- iii. Receiver's address: _____
- iv. Attention line: _____
- v. Reference line: _____
- vi. Salutation: _____
- vii. Subject line OR heading: _____
- viii. Main body: _____
- ix. Closing sentence: _____
- x. Signature: _____

C] What follows is a sample of a formal business letter – read it carefully and identify its main parts from those mentioned above.

Monroe Training Solutions
42, Preston Court
Norfolk PE27 5MR
Tel: 01485 5974567
Email: jmonroe@gmail.com
www.monroetraining.com

6 May 2012

Private and confidential

Re: Your letter dated May 2, 2012

Department of Economics
Vancouver Business School
2373 Canadian Walk

Vancouver
BC Canada V5P 9S8

Attention Ms Victoria Howes

Dear Ms. Victoria Howes,

Subject: Conference Participation

With reference to your letter of 30 April, I would like to thank you for inviting me to speak as a keynote speaker at the Business Solutions conference organized by the Vancouver Business School this November.

It will be my pleasure to attend and I am planning on giving a talk on the following topic: Creative Innovation for Business Managers. Please find enclosed a copy of my latest book for your interest.

I would be interested in asking you a few questions about the event. Perhaps we could arrange a call at your earliest convenience to discuss further details.

Finally, I would like to confirm that I have sent my proposal and speaker form via e-mail to the administrator as requested.

Yours sincerely,

Joanna Monroe
Training Consultant

Encl. copy of *Creative Innovation*

What follows is a detailed description of each part we find in a formal business letter, followed by examples.

1. THE LETTERHEAD

Letterhead is printed on the company's stationery, in one or more colours and gives much information about the company. It is usually printed in the middle, the left hand OR right-hand

corner (B.E.) and includes the company's logo, full legal name followed by its full address, telephone, fax and email address. The type of the company is printed after its name. In the UK, the most common company abbreviations are:

- PLC: Public Limited Company
- Ltd: private limited liability company (Ε.Π.Ε. = Περιορισμένης Ευθύνης)
- & Co: partnership between two or more people (= & ΣΙΑ)
- Son/s, Bros (brothers), Daughter/s: the company is a family concern (= Αφοί)
- INC: Incorporated (in the USA)

EXAMPLE:

AUDIOSONIC Ltd.
Head House, Main Street, Rain Hill,
London SB2311B
Chairman Harry Brown Directors S.B.
Smith, N. Mat
Telephone (01) 7235211
Fax: +44(0)234567899
Email: har_brown@audiosonic.co.uk

However, in case there is no letterhead we simply write the sender's address. The sender's address is written on the top right-hand side of the page, which includes the name and the number of your house, the name of the road, the village, town, city and postcode and last the name of the country.

EXAMPLE

Industrial Building
24-28 White Road
Liverpool BL47TF
UNITED KINGDOM

2. DATE

The date is inserted below the sender's address, usually separated from it by a space. If there is a printed letterhead, it is also written on the right-hand side of the page. Writing the month in the date in figures can be confusing because 11.2.21 means 11th February 2021 in most countries BUT 2nd November 2021 in the USA. Different regions use different formats for writing dates: in the United States, dates are written in the month-day-year format (3/15/2016, March 15, 2016) but in most English-speaking countries the date is written in a day-month-year format (15/03/2016, 15 March 2016).

British style

12th October, 2021
12 October 2021

American Style

October 12, 2021

12 Oct. 2021

October 12th 2021

The abbreviations [th, st, nd, rd] are acceptable but they may be omitted – abbreviations may be used for Jan. Feb. Aug. Sept. Oct. Nov. dec. but they should be avoided.

The appearance of the **date** in English has particular rules which may differ from those in other languages. In addition to that it shows specific differences in spelling between British and American English. These two facts can sometimes be challenging for English language learners. Despite that a general convention dictates that the names of the months are capitalized in English. Now, consider the following distinctive characteristics and variations:

- ✓ The usual order of writing in British English is day, month, and year:
 - 15 June 2009
 - 15th June 2009 (→ note the information below)
 - 15/06/2009 or 15/06/09
 - 15-06-2009 or 15-06-09
- ✓ In American English, however, it is common to write the month first, then the day, and finally the year:
 - June 15, 2009
 - June 15th, 2009 (→ also consider the information below)
 - 06/15/2009 or 06/15/09
 - 06-15-2009 or 06-15-09

Even if you can still see it now and then, it is no longer usual to write the abbreviations ‘1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th,’ etc., especially in formal correspondence – but they are still spoken (as explained in the section below). Furthermore, it is advisable to write out the month as a word to avoid confusion. Again, note the capitalisation of the month:

- When the date is written in a sentence, the preposition ‘on’ comes before it:
 - “He sent me the letter on 12 January 2016.”
- If only the year is mentioned, the preposition ‘in’ precedes it:
 - “In 2013, Peter and his wife bought a new house.”

3. PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

This phrase may be written above the Receiver’s address, and more importantly, on the envelope. Variations of the phrase may be the: “*Confidential*”, “*Strictly confidential*”.

4. THE RECEIVER'S ADDRESS

The receiver's address (also, known as the inside address) is inserted below the sender's address and on the opposite side of the paper. It includes the surname of the person you are writing to (if known), or the title or position in the company (if known), the department of the company, or the company only; the name of the house or the building, the number of the building and the name of the street or road, the name of the town or city and the postcode and finally the name of the country. The most common courtesy titles used in addresses are as follows:

- *Mr* (.) (Mister) – title used for a man
- *Mrs* (.) – title for a married woman
- *Miss* (.) – title used for an unmarried woman
- *Ms* (.) – for both married and unmarried women and tends to be the most prevalent title to address a woman
- *Messrs* (.) – for two or more men
- *Mmes* (.) – for two or more women

** (.) indicates that the full stop can be omitted

There are also cases in which special titles can be used such as Doctor (Dr.), Professor (Prof.) and they are followed by a given name e.g., Professor John Brown. If the recipient's name is unknown, we can write his/her job title, e.g. The Personnel Manager in the inside address.

5. ATTENTION LINE

This is used when you address your letter directly to a company, but you want the letter to be dealt with by a specific person or directed to a particular department. The attention line is typed two lines below the inside address (recipient's address) and two lines above the salutation. For example: Attention: Mr. P. James / Attention of Mr. P. James / For the attention of the Sales Manager / To the attention of Ms. Jane Harper / ATTN: Ms. Jane Harper.

6. SALUTATIONS

The salutation is placed two lines below the inside address / recipient's address and they are usually followed by a comma. The standard and best way of beginning a letter is *Dear* (with capital D). There are different ways of salutations:

- *Dear Sir*: letter to a man whose name you do not know
- *Dear Sirs*: to address a company (B.E) – *Ladies and Gentlemen* (A.E.)
- *Dear Sir / Madame*: when you do not know the name or sex of the addressee
- *Dear Madame*: to address a woman whose name you do not know (married or single)

When you know the name of the recipient, the salutation is *Dear* followed by the person's courtesy title and surname, e.g. Dear Mr. Cornish. In British correspondence a comma can be used after the salutation, e.g. *Dear Mr. Cornish*, whereas in American English a comma is used

when you address people informally, e.g. Dear John, and a colon is used when you address them formally, e.g. *Dear Mr Johnson*.

7. SUBJECT TITLE / LINE

The subject lines are very useful in formal letters since many letters on the same subject may be exchanged at intervals of some weeks during which other matters may be examined and other letters added to the files. The subject line may be omitted but, if used, it saves introducing the subject in the first paragraph and enables the reader to see what the letter is to deal with. It is placed below the salutation and it is printed either in capitals or in bold type, or underlined. It is not necessary to begin the subject title with Re: For example: Re: Information Technologies Conference / SUBJECT: Information Technologies Conference / Subject: Information Technologies Conference.

8. MAIN BODY OF THE LETTER

Every aspect of the subject matter requires a separate paragraph. The paragraphs may be indented, or blocked. Usually, a line space is left between paragraphs in the body of the letter. In the first paragraph, clearly state why you are writing (“With reference to our conversation of August 3”, “With reference to your letter/email of (date)”, “Regarding our meeting on Thursday...”). The first opening paragraph is mostly used to state the date of the letter being answered, the subject matter and the writer’s feelings on the subject. The middle paragraphs elaborate on the subject matter, consisting of short paragraphs which enable the reader to comprehend the matter easily. Spacing should be single within paragraphs and double between paragraphs. Keep the paragraphs short and confine each on to a single, central key idea. The closing paragraph serves as a summary of the points raised before, recapitulating the message and giving the final shot. Some common phrases for closing business letters are: Please do not hesitate to contact us again if you have any questions or concerns / Please let me know if I can be of more assistance / If you need further help, please contact us again / We look forward to our next meeting.

9. COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE / CLOSING

It should be two spaces under the last sentence of the last paragraph of the letter on the left hand and can be followed by a comma. Commonly used formal closings are:

- *Yours faithfully* – if you begin the letter with Dear Sir/Dear Sirs/Dear Madame/Dear Sir or Madame
- *Yours sincerely* – if your letter begins the letter with a personal name

The Americans tend to use “*Yours truly, Yours very truly, Respectfully yours*” for formal correspondence and *Best regards, Kind regards*, for friendly letters.

10. SIGNATURE

The simplest form of the signature consists of the sender's name, typed and signed. You have to type your name after your handwritten signature. It is advisable to use your courtesy title in the signature block in order for your correspondent to identify your sex and address correctly when s/he replies. For example:

Yours faithfully,

(Signature)

Mr J. Smith

Asst. Sales Manager

In B.E. the abbreviation per pro (P.P) means for and behalf and it appears in the signature block (secretaries use per pro when they sign letters on behalf of their bosses). For example:

Yours faithfully

(Mrs)

p.p. B. Brown

Managing Director

If an assistant signs his/her name on behalf of someone else, s/he must type his/her name and title below the signature. For example:

Yours sincerely,

(signature)

Karen Hope

Assistant to John Morris

11. REFERENCE INITIALS

Reference initials are an optional addition to any letter and can be used to identify the writer and the typist. They may appear at the top, after the letterhead, above the date, and on the left margin (British English) or bottom of the page, left-justified (American English) and are indicated by the signer's initials in capitals, followed by a slash (/) or colon (:), and the lowercase initials of the employee who prepared the letter. If the letter has enclosures, put the typist's initials under the enclosure notice. If not, put the initials two to four line spaces under your name and title.

For example:

John Green

Sales Manager

JG/lk

Besides, the information ‘Your ref.’ or ‘Our ref.’ may be employed to indicate the reference. Consequently, a complete line may look like this:

- BRS/rm
- Your ref. JK/887 / Our ref. 54/hn

12. ENCLOSURES

An enclosure is another document sent with a business letter and they appear in the bottom left hand corner of the page. Enclosures may be brochures, order forms, reports and other kind of documents. You should mention in the first paragraph of your letter that you have enclosed something and mention it again at the bottom of the page, under your signature. To reference your enclosure in the letter, you can use one of these phrases:

- We are enclosing
- I have enclosed
- Enclosed is
- Please find enclosed

Two to four line spaces under your name and title, at the very bottom of your business letter, reference the enclosure again. You can either type out the full word “Enclosure” and include the number of enclosures after it in parentheses. For example:

Enclosures (3) 1. Invoice 1029
2. Return slip
3. Customer satisfaction survey

OR

encs (2) 1. Invoice 1029
2. Return slip

If the letter is sent via mail, the word *Attachment* should be used instead and the same rules as those for the enclosures should be followed.

13. COPIES / COPY NOTATION

c.c./cc (carbon copies) is written usually at the end of the letter (below the enclosures or reference initials) and indicates that copies have been sent to other people, apart from the named receiver. For example: *Cc: Ted Hanks, CFO*. In case you do not want the named recipients to know that other people have received copies, wrote **b.c.c.** (blind carbon copies) on the copies themselves, but not of course, on the top copy.

14. POST SCRIPTUM (P.S.)

No longer than two lines below the last notation, used to write an additional message after the letter has been signed – though it is rarely used nowadays.

15. KINDS OF BUSINESS WRITING

Business writing is formatted differently than academic or creative writing. Often, a company will choose a style to use for all of its internal materials and correspondence. There are three main formats from which to choose:

- Indented style
- Block style
- Modified block style

Indented Style

Imperial Stationery Ltd
258 North Hampton Road Manhasset, NY 10847 (914) 375-2788

January 4, 2007

Ms. Ashley Nickols
Savbizcor Ltd
28 Green St., Suite 11
Upstate, NY 10947

Dear Ms. Nickols:

Thank you for ordering 15 cases of premium paper from Imperial Stationery Ltd. Your order has been shipped and should reach you within the next five business days.

Find enclosed your total bill for the above order amounting to \$794.85, and the check for \$23.85 is your refund. Because you paid in advance, we are giving you 3 percent cash discount and we also are paying for shipping and handling.

Imperial Stationery is pleased to add you to its list of customers. We look forward to your next order.

Sincerely,
J. O'Conelly
Jennifer O'Conelly
Customer Service

2 Enclosures

Sawvy-Business-Correspondence.com

Block style: letter

Catherine Davies
15 Qingtong Rd.-1011
Pudong New District,
Shanghai, PRC 201203

1 blank line

November 2, 2015

3 blank lines

Ms. Nina Lin
Double Design
Room 205, Building 3
Lane 2498, Pudong Avenue
Shanghai, PRC

1 blank line

Dear Ms. Lin:

1 blank line

I am writing to request an interview regarding Double Design's opening for a graphic designer.

1 blank line

I am a recent graduate of the Academy of Art with a degree in graphic design. For the past six months, I have interned with Studio Design in Shanghai, learning to apply the skills I gained in school. I appreciate an opportunity to learn more about the graphic designer position and to discuss how I can contribute to your company.

1 blank line

I have enclosed my résumé for your reference. Please feel free to contact me for any reason at (021) 5184-3155 or by email at cath.davies@yahoo.com. Thank you for your attention. I look forward to hearing from you.

1 blank line

Best regards,

Catherine Davies

3 blank lines

Catherine Davies

1 blank line

Enc (1)

1 blank line

cc: Flora Lopez

1 Every part of a piece of writing begins at the left-hand margin

2 Use hard returns between paragraphs

0
1
8

22

4 What are the advantages and disadvantages of modified block style?

Similar to block style, modified block style looks clean and uncluttered on the page. It is a common choice for business letters. Let's look at a sample of the modified block style.

Pudong New District,
Shanghai, PRC 201203

Catherine Davies
15 Qingtong Rd.-1011
Pudong New District,
Shanghai, PRC 201203

November 2, 2015

1 blank line

3 blank lines

Ms. Nina Lin
Double Design
Room 205, Building 3
Lane 2498, Pudong Avenue
Shanghai, PRC

1 blank line

Dear Ms. Lin:

1 blank line

I am writing to request an interview regarding Double Design's opening for a graphic designer.

1 blank line

I am a recent graduate of the Academy of Art with a degree in graphic design. For the past six months, I have interned with Studio Design in Shanghai, learning to apply the skills I gained in school. I appreciate an opportunity to learn more about the graphic designer position and to discuss how I can contribute to your company.

1 blank line

I have enclosed my résumé for your reference. Please feel free to contact me for any reason at (021) 5184-3155 or by email at cath.davies@yahoo.com. Thank you for your attention. I look forward to hearing from you.

1 blank line

Best regards,
Catherine Davies
Catherine Davies

1 blank line

Enc (1)

1 blank line

cc: Flora Lopez

0
2
0

Notice how similar this is to the indented style. The only difference is that the paragraphs are not indented; instead, they begin at the left-hand margin.

16. LIST OF PHRASES TO BE USED IN FORMAL LETTERS

<p>Opening a letter [first time]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have the honour to..... • I take the liberty to • This is to inform /advise you that • Please kindly note that • I would like to take the opportunity of informing / to inform you that • This is to certify that • I hereby/herewith wish to inform/advise/notify you of • We are writing to inform you that/to confirm/to request/to enquire about... • I am contacting for the following reason • I recently read /heard about and would like tom know • Having seen your advertisement in, I would like to •
<p>Referring to previous contact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you for your letter of March 15 • Thank you for contacting us.... • In reply to your request, • Thank you for your letter regarding • With reference to our telephone conversation yesterday • Further to our meeting last week • It was a pleasure meeting you in last month. • I enjoyed having lunch with you last week in • I would just like to confirm the main points we discussed on Tuesday..... • With reference to your • Referring to your • With further reference to • Replying to your letter • In response to your letter • As requested in your letter • With regard to my email of • Following our letter of the 4th • I regret to inform you that • Reverting to our letter • In compliance with your request
<p>Making request</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We would appreciate it if you would • I would be grateful if you could • Could you please send me • Could you possibly tell us / let us have • In addition, I would like to receive • It would be helpful if you could send us ...

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am interested in (obtaining / receiving) • I would appreciate your immediate attention to this matter ... • Please let me know what action you propose to take
Closing a letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoping to receive your reply soon • Looking forward to a reply at your earliest convenience • Thank you for an early reply • An early answer would be appreciated • I would greatly appreciate an early reply • Expecting to receive/get a satisfactory reply and thanking you in advance • Thank you in advance for any help you can give us • Please accept my apologies for the trouble this mistake has caused you • Regretting the trouble we are causing you • The above for your guidance • Thank you in advance for your cooperation • Assuring you of my very best attention at all times • Always at your disposal for any further information
Building up or adding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the first place • First of all • Secondly/Next/Besides/Further • Equally important • Lastly/Last • Furthermore/Moreover/Also/In addition • To begin with/In the second place/Apart from that
Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Therefore • Consequently • As a result • So / thereupon • Thus / So
Summary – Repetition – Exemplification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To sum up • On the whole • In short/In brief/In sum • In other words • As I have stated • For instance/For example
Expressing an opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In my opinion • To my mind • On the other hand • Yet/Still/Although • In contrast to • In spite of/In spite of the fact that

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Despite/Despite the fact that• From my point of view, I believe• As far as I am concerned• It would appear that• It seems/It appears to me that• Personally• However/Nevertheless/Notwithstanding/But
--	---

Following you will find a business letter with its basic parts numbered and explained.

Basic letter parts

1
Quality Cosmetics, Inc.
302 Beauty Lane, Suite 5
San Bruno, CA 94066
(650) 656-7000
act@cos.com
1 blank line
October 12, 2015 2

3
CERTIFIED MAIL
4
PERSONAL
1 blank line
Permissions Department
Harbinger Publishing
309 Ditmas Ave
Brooklyn, NY 11218-4901 5
1 blank line
Attention Mr. Donald Williams 6
1 blank line
Re: Your letter dated October 9, 2015 7
1 blank line
Dear Permissions Department: 8
1 blank line
• Subject: Illustration: Girl Applying Lipstick 9
1 blank line
May I use one of your illustrations in my in-house report titled "Third Quarter Growth in the Cosmetics Industry"? The illustration is called "Girl Applying Lipstick." 10
1 blank line
Thanks for your time and attention. Please contact me as soon as possible at (415) 748-9852.
1 blank line
Regards, 11
1 blank line
Irina Safarova 12
1 blank line
Irina Safarova 13
Analyst, Quality Cosmetics 14
1 blank line
IS/jd 15
1 blank line
Enc: catalogue 16
cc: Flora Lopez 17
P.S. 18

0
2
8

PE
Conf

PERSONAL -
Confidential

7 - annual notation (envelope)

CHAPTER 1
Writing Business Letters

7 | Basic Elements of a Business Letter

1 **SENDER'S ADDRESS**

- Within the letterhead (printed company logo and address) or typed

2 **DATE**

- USA date format: MM/DD/YYYY (e.g., October 12, 2015)
- British date format: DD/MM/YYYY (e.g., 12 October 2015)

3 **SPECIAL MAILING NOTATIONS**

- CERTIFIED MAIL
- SPECIAL DELIVERY
- AIR MAIL

4 **ON-ARRIVAL NOTATIONS**

- PERSONAL
- CONFIDENTIAL
- PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL
- STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

5 **RECIPIENT'S ADDRESS**

- Name of person addressed
- Title of person addressed
- Name of organization
- Street number and name
- City, state, and postal code
- Country of destination

6 **ATTENTION**

7 **REFERENCE** (if any)

8 **SALUTATION**

- Dear Sir:
- Dear Sir or Madam:
- Dear Ms. XXX:
- Dear [Full Name]:
- To Whom It May Concern:
- Ladies and Gentlemen:

9 **SUBJECT**

10 **BODY OF LETTER**
(First paragraph)
(Second paragraph ...)

11 **CLOSING**

12 **SIGNATURE** (handwritten)

13 **NAME** (typed)

14 **TITLE** (typed)

15 **IDENTIFICATION INITIALS of the writer and typist**

- IS/jd
- IS:jd

16 **ENCLOSURE/ATTACHMENT**

- Enc.
- Encl.

17 **COPY TO**

- cc: carbon copy
- pc: for photocopy

18 **POSTSCRIPT**

0
2
9

REFERENCES

- Witte, M., *“Business Writing: Skills, Applications, and Practices”*, 3rd Edition.
- Mormori, P. (2013). *“Commercial Correspondence: A Practical Guide”*. Εκδόσεις ΦΑΙΔΙΜΟΣ.
- Dubicka, I. & O’ Keefee, M. (2017). *“Advanced Market Leader”*. Pearson Publications
- Διαμαντή, Α., Δούναβης, Γ. Μ. & Ρασσιάς, Δ. (2022). *“Επιχειρησιακή Επικοινωνία Πλοιάρχου”*. Ίδρυμα Ευγενίδου.
- <https://www.usinggrammar.com/business-english/british-sample-letter.php#structure>
- <http://www.savvy-business-correspondence.com/index.html>