

Letter Writing

Even though we often use email and fax to correspond today, business letters sent by post ("snailmail") are still very important. A well-structured letter is a pleasure to receive and creates a good impression. It is just as easy to write a well organised letter as a badly organised one, because the layout of a modern business letter in English is very simple. Your address is at the top (in the middle or on the right). The rest of the letter can be in "block" format, with each line starting on the left. There should also be plenty of white space.

There are some minor differences in layout between British and American English and according to personal style. Here, however, are the key elements of a letter, in their usual order:

1 Your address, telephone, fax, email

Put your address, telephone, fax and/or email at the top in the centre or on the right. Do **not** put your personal name here, even if it is a personal letter. (Of course, if you are using company paper, the company name will probably be here.)

2 Date

Be careful when writing the date. All-number dates are written differently in British English (31/12/00) and American English (12/31/00). This can lead to confusion. It may be better to write the date in full (31 December 2000 or December 31st, 2000). This can also look less "official" and therefore more polite.

3 Destination name and address

This is the name of the person to whom you are writing, his/her job title, the company name and address. This should be the same as on the envelope.

4 References

These are codes that you or your correspondent may use to define a letter or subject. You write your correspondent's reference in the form: 'Your ref: 01234'. If you wish to include your own reference, you write: 'My ref: 56789' or 'Our ref: 56789'.

5 Salutation (Dear...)

A letter in English almost always begins with 'Dear...', even if you do not know the person. There are several possibilities:

- Dear Mr Smith
- Dear Mrs Smith
- Dear Miss Smith
- Dear Ms Smith
- Dear Sir
- Dear Madam
- Dear Sirs
- Gentlemen

6 Subject

The subject of your letter. This is useful but not obligatory.

7 Body

The letter itself, in well-structured paragraphs.



8 Ending (Yours...)

Yours sincerely Yours faithfully Yours truly

9 Your signature

Sign in black or blue ink, preferably with a fountain pen.

10 Your name

Your first name and surname, for example:

- Mary Bond
- James Smith

11 (Your title)

If you are using company headed paper, write your Job Title here. If you are writing a personal letter, write nothing here.

12 Enclosures

Indicate that one or more documents are enclosed by writing 'Enc: 2' (for two documents, for example). Here is a very simple letter as an example of layout.



Lunar Rock Productions Ltd
7 Moonlight Boulevard, Dover, 2030 NSW, Australia
tel: +61 2 337 476 fax: +61 2 337 477

7 April 2000
Mr James Bound

Sales Director

Universal Aspects Ltd
769 Oxford Street
LONDON WC1 007
UK

Your ref: 16538
Our ref: SR/tgh/7

Dear Mr Bound

PLANNED VISIT TO LONDON

Thank you for your letter dated 3 April 2000.

We intend to stay in London for five days and I should be grateful if you could make the necessary arrangements as previously discussed.

I am enclosing a copy of our intended programme.

I very much look forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely

Susan Rogers

Susan Rogers

Art Director

Lunar Rock Productions Ltd

Enc: 1