

Business Letters and Envelopes

A BUSINESS LETTER and its envelope are often judged together. To make a good business impression, the letter inside and the envelope outside must both follow certain professional practices. This lesson explains the parts and formatting for business letters and envelopes.



Objective:



Describe guidelines for preparing business letters and envelopes.

Key Terms:



block style	inside address	sender's typed signature
body	letterhead	writer's initials and/or typist's initials
complimentary close	quadruple-space	
date	return address	
double-space	salutation	
enclosure notation	sender's handwritten signature	
indication of copies sent to others	sender's job title	

Creating Business Letters and Envelopes

A business letter is used as correspondence between an individual and a business, between a business and an individual, or between two businesses. Understanding how to create both the letter and the envelope is a necessary skill in the business world. In this lesson, you will learn about the parts and formatting of business letters and envelopes.

THE LETTER

Parts of the Letter

The parts of a business letter are:

- ◆ Return address
- ◆ Date
- ◆ Inside address
- ◆ Salutation
- ◆ Body
- ◆ Complimentary close
- ◆ Sender's handwritten signature
- ◆ Sender's typed signature
- ◆ Sender's job title
- ◆ Writer's initials and/or typist's initials
- ◆ Enclosure notation
- ◆ Indication of copies sent to others

The **return address** is the sender's full mailing address. It allows the recipient to handle and file the letter without keeping the envelope. Usually the return address, as well as the company's full name, telephone number, fax number, e-mail address, and website address, will be printed on a business's **letterhead** (preprinted stationery). Along with the company name, the letterhead will often include a logo and a slogan.

If the return address is not preprinted on the stationery, the sender's full street address is typed on the first line, and the city, state, and ZIP code on the second line. This information is followed by the **date** (month, day, and year) on the third line. If company letterhead is used, then only the date need be typed.

The **inside address** is the part of a letter that shows to whom and where the letter is being sent. If possible, identify the specific individual responsible for handling the type of matter about which you are writing, and address your letter to that person. Include the recipient's full name (with courtesy title, such as "Mr.," "Ms.," "Dr."), his or her job title (if short, this title may go on the same line as the name; otherwise, on a separate line), the company name, the street address, and the city, state, and ZIP code.

The **salutation** is the greeting. If you are not on a first-name basis with the recipient, include a courtesy title and the last name (e.g., "Dear Dr. Jacobs:"). If you are on a first-name basis, that name is sufficient (e.g., "Dear Ann:"). Avoid including both the first and last names in the salutation, as is often done on bulk mailings (e.g., "Dear Philip Johnson:"). If you do not know the name and gender of a specific person at the company to which the letter is being sent, use the salutation "Dear Sir or Madam:."

The **body** of the letter is the sender's message. This part of the letter should be as concise as possible yet as thorough as the subject demands. Being courteous is essential.

The **complimentary close** is a polite expression (e.g., "Yours truly" or "Sincerely") used for ending the letter.

The **sender's handwritten signature** is the element that shows the writer has read the typed letter and agrees with its content. It makes the letter official.

The **sender's typed signature** is a version of the signature that provides the exact spelling of the name, preventing any errors from the misreading of handwriting. A courtesy title (e.g., "Mr." or "Ms.") may be included to prevent any misunderstanding of gender.

The **sender's job title** is the element that identifies the sender's position with the company.

The **writer's initials and/or typist's initials** are elements that identify who wrote the letter and who keyed it.

The **enclosure notation** is an indication following the signature that something in addition to the letter was placed in the envelope (e.g., an agenda or an itinerary).

Finally, the letter may include an **indication of copies sent to others**, a notation that shows who besides the primary recipient will receive the letter and any enclosures.

Format of the Letter

There are many formatting options, and different companies have different requirements for formatting their business letters. Following is one common format.

Set the left and right margins at 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches, and the bottom margin at 1 inch. The top margin will depend on whether printed letterhead is used.

Key the entire letter in **block style**, the format in which every line of every part begins at the left margin. Select a legible size and font of type, such as 11- or 12-point Arial or 12-point Times New Roman. Set justification to "Left," leaving the right margin ragged.



DIGGING DEEPER...

UNCOVERING ADDITIONAL FACTS: Formal Business Writing

Besides following the rules of professional formatting, the business letter should follow the rules of formal writing. For example, it should use standard terminology, not slang, and full words, not contractions. The business letter should be as clear and to the point as possible. Sentences should not be cluttered with extra words just to make the writer sound smarter or clever. Humor, sarcasm, and irony should also be avoided.

Dig deeper into formal business letter writing by visiting the following websites:

<http://www.usingenglish.com/resources/letter-writing.php> and http://www.scribendi.com/advice/how_to_write_a_formal_letter.en.html

If letterhead is used, set the top margin so that the date appears $\frac{3}{4}$ inch below the preprinted information. This distance may be adjusted depending on what looks best with a particular letterhead design. **Quadruple-space**, or press the Enter key four times, after the date.

If letterhead is not available, use good-quality $8\frac{1}{2}$ " $\times$ 11" paper, and begin the return address 2 inches from the top of the sheet. The date goes on the line below the return address. Quadruple-space after the date; then type the first line of the inside address.

After the last line of the inside address, **double-space**, or press the Enter key twice; then type the salutation, followed by a colon and another double-space.

Single-space the body of the letter, with a double-space between paragraphs. Follow the last paragraph with a double-space; then key the complimentary close. Capitalize only the first letter of the first word of the complimentary close (e.g., "Sincerely yours," "Yours truly"), and follow the close with a comma.

Quadruple-space after keying the complimentary close. This creates space for the handwritten signature, which should be in blue or black ink. If the sender and the recipient are on a first-name basis, the handwritten signature may consist of only the sender's first name. Otherwise, the full name should be signed.

The sender's full name is typed on the line below the quadruple-space left for the handwritten signature. The sender's job title comes next. If the title is short, such as "President," the sender's name may be followed by a comma, and the title typed on the same line. If it is longer, such as "Vice President of Public Relations," it is typed on the line below the name.

The writer's initials and/or typist's initials appear a double-space below the line containing the job title. If the writer keyed the letter, then his or her initials are typed in lowercase (e.g., "rlm"). If the writer dictated the letter and someone else keyed it, the writer's initials appear in capitals, followed by a colon and the typist's initials in lowercase (e.g., "RLM:edi").

If something is enclosed with a letter, the notation "Enclosure" is typed a double-space below the writer's initials and/or typist's initials. If more than one item is enclosed, the word is made plural and followed by the number of items (e.g., "Enclosures 2").

Any indication of copies sent to others should appear on the next line. The usual format is "cc: Ms. Andrea Walters."

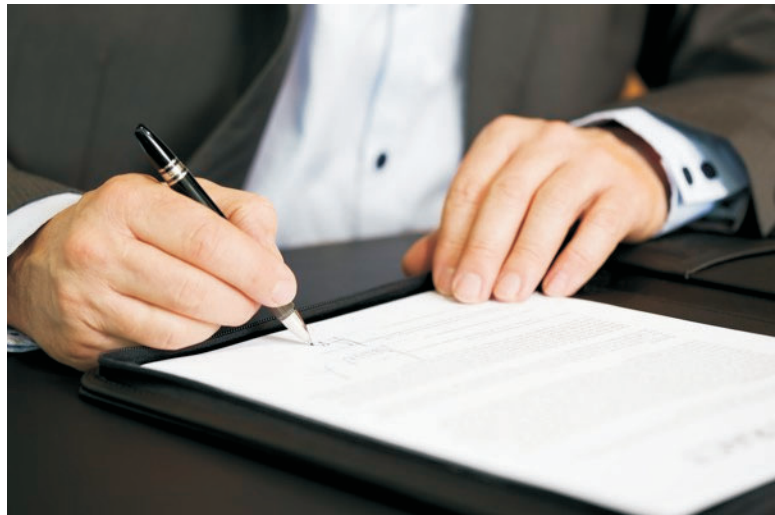


FIGURE 1. Always hand sign your letter.

THE ENVELOPE

The envelope is the first thing the recipient sees when your business letter arrives. It should look as professional as the letter inside. Use the same type size and font you used for the letter. If you had access to company letterhead, a No. 10 envelope ($4\frac{1}{8}$ " $\times$ $9\frac{1}{2}$ ") with the return address preprinted on it is usually available. If you did not use letterhead, copy the return address from the letter, and paste it 0.3 inch from the top and 0.3 inch from the left edge of the envelope. Copy the recipient's address from the letter, and paste it 2 inches from the top and 4 inches from the left edge. Your word-processing program may have a special feature for creating the envelope.

Lay your letter face up on your desk or other hard surface, and fold it in thirds the $8\frac{1}{2}$ -inch way, beginning at the bottom. Insert it into the envelope with the upper third of the letter right side up and farthest away from you. Be sure you have put all the enclosures into the envelope before sealing it. Apply the proper postage.

Summary:



Understanding how to create both letters and their envelopes is a necessary skill in the business world. You must know the elements required to convey your message professionally. Including all the essential parts and presenting them in an acceptable format will create a positive impression and help your business letter get the desired results.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. Give three examples of a salutation.
2. What should be included in the inside address?
3. What is the style of business letter called in which all lines start at the left margin?
4. Give three examples of a complimentary close.
5. What size envelope should be used with a business letter?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Pretend you own the ABC Grocery Store. The main supplier of your fruits and vegetables, XYZ Produce Company, has been sending you products that you consider less than top quality. Some of your longtime customers have complained to you. Write a business letter to Elaine Martin, Director of Customer Relations at XYZ, explaining the problem and requesting that a company representative call on you. You do not know Elaine Martin personally. The letter will be dictated by you

and typed by your administrative assistant, David Mark Greene. You will enclose two photos that show examples of the inferior produce. Be sure to format your letter and its envelope as described in this lesson.

Web Links:



Writing a Business Letter

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/653/01/>

Importance of Business Letters

<http://smallbusiness.chron.com/importance-good-business-letter-format-23826.html>

Interactive Letter Generator

http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/letter_generator/

Business Letter Sample

<http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Business-Letter>