

<b>LETTER WRITING BASICS</b>		<b>Student/Class Goal</b> Students want to write a letter to their classroom teacher's supervisor about an issue they are having in class.
<b>Outcome</b> <i>(lesson objective)</i> Learners will write a business letter addressing one area of concern.		<b>Time Frame</b> 1-2 hours
<b>Standard</b> <i>Convey Ideas in Writing</i>		<b>NRS EFL 2-4</b>
<b>COPS</b> Determine the purpose for communicating.	<b>Activity Addresses Components of Performance</b> As a group, students will construct a letter about a classroom issue; then individually they will write a letter that requests information, files a complaint or complement, or is a letter to the editor/legislator.	
Organize and present information to serve the purpose, context, and audience.	Each student will write a letter that contains appropriate information for the type of letter written.	
Pay attention to the conventions of the English language usage, including grammar, spelling, and sentence structure to minimize barriers to readers' comprehension.	Students will follow a business letter template and pay attention to specific letter writing mechanics.	
Seek feedback and revise to enhance the effectiveness of communication	Using a word processor with spell-check, students will become familiar with editing techniques offered by computer programs. They will also have peers edit for content using the checklist as a guideline.	
<b>Materials</b> Sample Business Letters/Memorandums <i>Parts of a Business Letter</i> Handout <i>Parts of a Business Letter</i> Checklist Word processing programs Letter Writing Basics Learning Objects		
<b>Learner Prior Knowledge</b> Brainstorm different types of letters that are written (thank you note, friendly letter, cover letter, business letter, memo, email, etc.). Introduce examples of several business letters to the class. Discuss which type of letter would be most appropriate in this situation. <b>TEACHER NOTE</b> Sample letters can be found in many classroom resources and online.		
<b>Instructional Activities</b> Step 1 - Discuss examples of situations when students would need to write business letters. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request information</li> <li>• Register a product or service complaint or express a compliment</li> <li>• Letter to an editor or public official</li> </ul> <p>Discuss what information you would include for each of the above letters.</p> <p>Request for information</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain your purpose for writing</li> <li>2. Ask any questions you may have</li> <li>3. Describe what information you would like to receive and when</li> <li>4. Thank them for their help</li> </ol> <p>Lodge a complaint</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe the product and then the problem</li> <li>2. Explain how you have tried to solve the problem</li> <li>3. Express what you would like the company to do</li> <li>4. Exchange, cash refund, discount coupons, etc.</li> </ol> <p>Letter to an editor or a public official</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe why you are writing</li> <li>2. Describe what you think about the situation</li> <li>3. Express and support your ideas for improvement and explain them with facts and examples</li> </ol>		

4. Request that the situation be changed or improved

Students can write these steps in their journals or the teacher can provide a handout with this information for future reference.

Step 2 - Talk about the parts of a business letter and have students point them out using a sample letter on an overhead projector. Pass out the *Parts of a Business Letter* handout included with this lesson. There are six main parts to every business letter:

**HEADING** Contains your address and the date.

**INSIDE ADDRESS** Contains the name and address of the company you are writing to.

**SALUTATION** Contains the greeting, usually Dear Sir or Madam: or the person's name, if you know it. Be sure to learn about how to address a public official.

**BODY** Write your message here.

**COMPLEMENTARY CLOSE** Contains the ending such as Sincerely, Sincerely yours, Cordially

**SIGNATURE** Contains your written first name and last name signature. These are also typed underneath your signature.

**TEACHER NOTE** Lower level students will need to follow the business letter template exactly and will need the *Parts of a Business Letter* handout created in language appropriate for their reading level. Scaffolding and scribing may also be necessary for these learners.

Step 3 - As a group, they will compose a letter that addresses their situation. This draft can then be written using a word processing program. Talk about the importance of using spell-check and editing features. A block or semi-block format can be used. Peers edit the letter using *Parts of a Business Letter* Checklist to guide the feedback process.

Step 4 - Individually, do students have a problem with a product or service or do they need information about a particular service? If not, they can write to an editor or a public official to express their opinion about an issue in their community [Dear Abby, Letter of Complaint, Letter to the Editor or Legislator, Letter to School or Agency]. Learners will write, using a word processing program, a business letter concerning their chosen topic. *Parts of a Business Letter* Checklist can be used by students. Several students can share their letters with the group, especially those that have chosen different purposes for writing. This allows students to hear the three different purposes for writing business letters. Letters can be sent and copies can be made for student's portfolios.

**Assessment/Evidence** *(based on outcome)*

Business Letter

*Parts of a Business Letter* Checklist

Teacher observation

**Teacher Reflection/Lesson Evaluation**

*Not yet completed.*

**Next Steps**

Letter Writing Basics Learning Objects will give students additional practice considering their purpose for writing.

**Technology Integration**

**Purposeful/Transparent**

By introducing the business letter checklist, students are able to monitor their own writing process.

**Contextual**

Practice writing as a group and then trying to write individually allows students to transfer their learning.

**Building Expertise**

Students are addressing an important classroom issue by writing this business letter. The teacher scaffolds the activity by providing a template for lower level students and those unfamiliar with business letters.

# Parts of a Business Letter

## The Heading

The heading contains the writer's address and the date of the letter. The writer's name is not included and only a date is needed in headings on letterhead stationery.

EXAMPLE      July 1, 2001  
                    128 North Clark Street  
                    Pittsburgh, PA 16107

## The Inside Address

This lists the person's name and business address that you are writing to. The inside address appears after the date on the left-hand side of the page. It should follow this format:

- Name
- Title (if applicable)
- Name of business or company
- Street or postal address
- City or town, state or province, zip code or postal code
- Country name (if applicable)

EXAMPLE      Ms Carol Romito  
                    Vice President  
                    Genesis Financial Group  
                    4025 Main Street  
                    Pittsburgh, PA 19103

## The Salutation

The salutation directly addresses the recipient of the letter and is followed by a colon (except when a friendly, familiar, sociable tone is intended, in which case a comma is used).

EXAMPLE      Dear Mr. Farmer: (formal)  
                    Dear Sir(s): or Madame: (if the person's name is not known)

If you don't know whether the recipient is a man or woman, the traditional practice has been to write "Dear Sir" or "Dear Sirs" — but that's sexist! The best solution is to make a quick, anonymous phone call to the organization and ask for a name; or, address the salutation to a department name, committee name, or a position name. Information about the company can often be found by doing a Google Search online.

EXAMPLE      Dear Personnel Department  
                    Dear Recruitment Committee  
                    Dear Chairperson

## Body of the Message

State the main business, purpose, or subject matter right away. Let the reader know from the very first sentence what your letter is about. Remember that when business people open a letter, their first concern is to know what the letter is about, what its purpose is, and why they must spend their time reading it. Therefore, avoid roundabout beginnings. If you are writing to apply for a job, begin with something like this: "I am writing to apply for the position you currently have open...."

## The Complimentary Close

This is where you end the letter. Make sure to have an appropriate sign-off. The complimentary close differs between formal letters and informal letters. Notice that only the first letter is capitalized, and is always followed by a comma.

EXAMPLE      Formal basis: Sincerely, Yours sincerely, Yours truly,  
Informal basis: Best regards, Best wishes, Cordially,  
Higher officials: Respectfully yours,

## The Signature Block

Usually, you type your name four lines below the complimentary close, and sign your name in between. Whenever possible, include your title or the name of the position you hold just below your name

EXAMPLE      Personally signed name  
*Ms. April Moore*  
Your name typed  
*Ms. April Moore*  
Your title typed  
*Director of Human Resources*

## End notations

Just below the signature block are often several abbreviations or phrases that have important functions.

### Initials

The initials in all capital letters are those of the writer of the letter, and the ones in lower case letters just after the colon are those of the typist.

### Enclosures

To make sure that the recipient knows that items accompany the letter in the same envelope, use such indications as "Enclosure," "Encl.," "Enclosures (2)." For example, if you send a resume and writing sample with your application letter, you'd do this: "Encl.: Resume and Writing Sample." If the enclosure is lost, the recipient will know.

### Copies

If you send copies of a letter to others, indicate this fact among the end notations also. If, for example, you were upset by a local merchant's handling of your repair problems and were sending a copy of your letter to the Better Business Bureau, you'd write this: "cc: Better Business Bureau." If you plan to send a copy to your lawyer, write something like this: "cc: Mr. Raymond Mason, Attorney."

# How to Write to a Legislator

## Addresses

If you don't know who your legislators are, call the reference desk of your public library. Or, if you live in the United States, first find out your nine-digit ZIP code (to do so, call your post office). Once you have it, you can visit the Congressional website at <http://congress.org> and use the "Find Your Reps" service. You don't need to find an address for US legislators. All Legislators can simply be reached at the House or Senate addresses listed below.

## Letter Basics

Letters to Legislators ideally should resemble business correspondence. Your name and address can appear either centered at the top of the page or directly underneath your signature. You can also include your phone number as part of your address. The address of the recipient appears on the left, above your salutation.

- If you wish to be perfectly correct, **the Honorable** should appear as the top line in the legislator's address. Their first and last names then stand alone on the next line.
- If you're writing to a **Representative**, your third and fourth lines will then be:  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515.
- For a **Senator**, use this address:  
United States Senate  
Washington, D. C. 20510.
- You'll begin, of course, with a **greeting**. If you're writing a Representative, address him or her as Mr. or Ms. Are you writing a Senator? Begin with "Dear Senator," followed by their surname.
- **Explain in your very first sentence** what your concern is. If you're writing about a specific bill, refer to it by name or number (e.g., House Bill \_\_\_\_\_), if you know it. Be sure to address only one concern in a given letter. You can always write again next week on a different matter.
- Then argue your point. Your Legislator will be especially interested in learning about your community and how the proposed legislation will affect it. **Be as specific as possible**, and provide examples that support your assertions.

## Follow Up Your Letter

You can call the House of Representatives' switchboard at (202) 225-3121. The Senate's main number is (202) 224-3121. Ask the operator who answers for the office of your Legislator. Of course, it's extremely unlikely that you will get to speak to your Legislator directly. However, the staff member you speak to should take notes as to your position and convey your message.

Source: Learn2.com, Inc., <http://www.learn2learn.com>

## Parts of the Business Letter Checklist

A business letter, unlike a friendly letter, is a clear, concise document that is sent for a purpose. The following questions should guide you in writing a good business letter.

<b>Circle</b>	<b>Please</b>	
The purpose of the letter (request information, register product, make a complaint/compliment, write editor or public official) is clear.	Yes	No
The audience is specific.	Yes	No
The body of the letter is well organized and to the point.	Yes	No
The letter is courteous even if it lodges a complaint.	Yes	No
Necessary information (dates, model numbers, etc.) has been given.	Yes	No
The six parts of a business letter are included and in the proper order: Heading Inside Address Salutation Body Complementary Close Signature	Yes	No
The letter follows consistent block or semi-block (modified) block form.	Yes	No
The letter is neat and uses formal language (no slang or contractions)	Yes	No
Letter is edited for spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and complete sentences.	Yes	No
The envelope is complete and accurate with return address and recipient address in correct positions.	Yes	No

Peer's comments on effectiveness:

**WRITER NOTE** Please correct any **No** that has been circled and submit your letter again to be edited.



<http://www.wisconline.org>

**Thinking about the Topic: Brainstorming**

**Author:** Deborah Seline

**School:** Northeast Wisconsin Technical College **Date:** 11/21/2001

**Description:** Students brainstorm a list of ideas related to a topic.

[http://www.wisc-online.com/objects/index\\_tj.asp?objID=WCN2201](http://www.wisc-online.com/objects/index_tj.asp?objID=WCN2201)

**Thinking about the Topic: Considering Your Purpose for Writing**

**Author:** Deborah Seline

**School:** Northeast Wisconsin Technical College **Date:** 6/6/2002

**Description:** The learner reads about the four main purposes for writing documents: expressive, literary, persuasive, and reality.

[http://www.wisc-online.com/objects/index\\_tj.asp?objID=WCN4602](http://www.wisc-online.com/objects/index_tj.asp?objID=WCN4602)