

How  
to  
Say It®

# HOW TO SAY IT®

*Choice Words, Phrases,  
Sentences, and Paragraphs  
for Every Situation*

*Revised  
and  
Expanded*

Rosalie Maggio



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Choice Words,  
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for Every Situation

ROSALIE MAGGIO

PRENTICE HALL



A member of Penguin Putnam Inc.  
375 Hudson Street  
New York, New York 10014

[www.penguinputnam.com](http://www.penguinputnam.com)

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Maggio, Rosalie.

How to say it: choice words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs for every situation / by Rosalie Maggio.—Rev. and expanded.

p. cm.

ISBN-10: 1-4295-1350-0 (pbk.)

1. Letter writing. 2. English language—Rhetoric. I. Title.

PE1483.M26 2001

806.6—dc21

2001036014

# **TO DAVID**

Liz, Katie, Matt, Nora





# *Acknowledgments*

Thank you to those who shared their letters and opinions with me: Shelley Sateren; Steve Sikora; Mark Maggio; Dr. Matt Maggio; Patrick Maggio, Esq.; Frank Maggio; Terry Hay Maggio; Mary Maggio; Dr. Paul T. Maggio; Kevin Maggio, Esq.; Irene Nash Maggio; Dr. Paul J. Maggio; Mike Maggio, Esq.; Michael Parker; Bonnie Z. Goldsmith, Patricia Yeager and the Denver Center for Independent Living; Nick Niemeyer; Sheila Hanley and The Dublin Walk; Maggie Parr; Jazzou Jones; Dr. Greg Filice; Debbye Calhoun Spang; Irmiter Contractors and Builders Limited; Jeanne Goerss Novak.

Many of the sentences, paragraphs, and letters are taken from letters I've saved over the years (imagine rummaging through boxes and boxes of them in the attic looking for that great thank-you note). Thanks and love to all my favorite correspondents. You know who you are.

My warm and grateful appreciation goes to Tom Power, professional angel and gifted and incisive editor. His abundance of ideas and unfailing courtesy have been a joy to work with these past twelve years.



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# Introduction

*All that is requisite to become proficient in any Art, is to know what to do and how to do it; and the Art of Letter-writing is no exception to this general rule.*

—F.M. PAYNE, *Payne's Business Letter Writer and Book of Commercial Forms* (1884)

*How to Say It*® is a practical, easy-to-use book that tells you what to say and how to say it. Its flexible approach helps you fashion compelling letters in little more time than it takes to handwrite or type them.

Although an impressive amount of business and social interaction takes place today over the telephone and fax, by e-mail, or in person, the well-written letter remains a staple of business success and one of the strongest connecting links between human beings.

Most of us are capable of writing a satisfactory letter, but few of us have the time and mental energy to deal with the countless letters that life today seems to demand of us—especially since all of them should have been written yesterday.

*How to Say It*® features comprehensive, versatile lists of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs that allow you to express yourself on any subject in your own voice and style.

Thesaurus-like, these lists provide you with terms relating to your topic. Whether you want to sound formal or casual, traditional or contemporary, businesslike or lighthearted, distant or intimate, you'll find here the words for every letterwriting occasion—from powerful, cogent business letters to warm, sensitive personal letters.

An important message of this book, delivered indirectly in its pages, is that there is rarely “one right way” to write a letter. You may follow, adapt, or ignore the guidelines given here; after all, you know more about your message and your reader than any letterwriting manual. Except for someone like Napoleon, who apparently wrote more than 50,000 letters in his lifetime (and nobody ever said to him, “Get a life!”), almost everyone can use this book to write letters with increased speed, individuality, success—and enjoyment!





# *How to Use This Book*

Begin by skimming the table of contents to familiarize yourself with the fifty letter topics available to you (for example, sales letters, thank-you notes, references, apologies, acknowledgments, letters dealing with employment).

Next, flip through the Appendixes so that you know what kind of help waits for you there: Appendix I deals with the mechanics of letter-writing (what kind of stationery to use, how to address an envelope, the four most common ways of setting up a letter on the page) while Appendix II deals with the content of your letter (writing tips, grammar and usage, frequently misspelled or confused words, redundant words and phrases, correct forms of address).

To find advice about the letter you want to write, either turn to the chapter that deals with that kind of letter or check the index in the back of the book. Its one thousand entries ensure that you will find the help you need.

Each chapter includes a brief introduction, a list of occasions for writing that type of letter, what to include in each letter, what not to say, comments on special situations, and what format to use.

At the heart of each chapter are the lists of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs you can use to construct your letter. Sample letters are also given.

The lists “prime the pump”—they start you thinking along the lines of that letter topic. They also provide those who want to compose their own letter with a number of appropriate words, or they allow those using the sample letters as guides to substitute words that fit their needs.

To compose a letter:

- Read through the “How to Say It” section, note the elements your letter should include, and personalize them to reflect your situation.
- Choose from the lists of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs those terms that are useful to you.
- Study the sample letters to see if one can serve as a model.
- Combine your checked-off words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs to produce a letter that says what you need it to say.
- Check your rough draft against the list of what not to say. Have you written something inappropriate? At this point, you may have a question about format or grammar or a social title. Check the Index to locate the answer in one of the Appendixes.

After writing your first few letters using this book, you may find that

it is not, after all, so difficult or time-consuming to write your share of the billions of letters mailed each year.

# Acceptances

*The mind gives us thousands of ways to say no, but there's only one way to say yes, and that's from the heart.*

—SUZE ORMAN

Once you decide to accept an invitation or grant a request, simply say so; this is one of the easiest letters to write.

A “yes” that doesn’t come from the heart results in an unenthusiastic acceptance and you may even find yourself backing out later. Writing the acceptance is not as difficult as being sure you want to say “yes” in the first place.

## Write Acceptances for

- admissions requests: schools/clubs/organizations
- franchise applications
- invitations: dinner/meeting/party/luncheon/hospitality
- job offers
- membership offers: board/commission/organization
- proposals
- requests: contributions/favors/help
- speaking invitations: conference/workshop/banquet
- wedding invitations (see WEDDINGS)

## How to Say It

- Express your pleasure in accepting the invitation/offer/proposal/bid or agreeing to do what was asked.
- Repeat the details of what you are accepting (meeting date and time, amount of the bid or of your contribution, the precise nature of your assistance, the duties you agree to assume).
- Inquire about particular needs: receipt for a tax-deductible contribution, directions to your host’s home, wheelchair accessibility, equipment for your speech, list of other organizers.
- Close with an expression of pleasure to come (seeing the person, working for the company, being part of the group) or of future action

(what you want to accomplish, actions you intend to take, a reciprocal invitation).

## What Not to Say

- Avoid ungracious amplifications: you are busy but you suppose you can manage it; you have two other events on the calendar that evening but you will try to stop by; you probably won't be a good speaker but, sure, you'll try. Let your "yes" be a simple "yes." If you have reservations about your acceptance, it may be better to decline.

## Tips on Writing

- Send acceptances as soon as possible. If you are late, apologize, but do not dwell on it.
- Acceptances are brief and generally deal only with the acceptance.
- Noted usage expert Rudolf Flesch says, "If your answer to an inquiry is yes, it's a good idea to make yes the first word of your letter."
- Be enthusiastic. It is entirely proper to simply state your acceptance and repeat the details of the invitation, but your stock with hosts, employers, or friends will go up if you add a sentence saying something personal, cheerful, or lively.
- When your invitation is issued in the name of more than one person, mention all of them in your reply. Mail your reply either to the person listed under the R.S.V.P. or to the first name given.
- Always respond promptly to an invitation marked "R.S.V.P." or "Please reply." This is mandatory, obligatory, required, compulsory, imperative, and essential.

## Special Situations

- When offered a position you want, write an acceptance letter that expresses your enthusiasm and pleasure and that confirms the details of your employment.
- When writing to offer a job to an applicant, include: a congratulatory remark about being chosen and something complimentary about the person's credentials, experience, or interview; information about the job—duties, salary, supervisors name, starting date; the name and telephone number of someone who can answer questions; an expression of goodwill about the person's employment with the company. Highlight some of the advantages of working for the company to influence the person's decision to accept the offer.
- In some situations (large weddings, for example), one of a couple

may accept an invitation while the other declines. In other cases (large dinner parties), check with your host to see if this is acceptable.

- White House invitations include the phone number of the Social Office where you telephone your acceptance and can ask questions about protocol, where to park your car, what to wear, how to respond to the invitation. General guidelines are: send your reply within a day of receiving the invitation; write the reply yourself (do not have a secretary do it); handwrite your reply on plain or engraved personal stationery; use the same format and person (first person or third person) to reply but insert “have the honor of accepting”; if the invitation was sent by the President’s or First Lady’s secretary (in the case of an informal invitation), reply to that person and write “Would you please tell/convey to...”

- Children can write brief acceptances for invitations: “Thank you for inviting me to your Halloween party. Wait till you see my costume!”

## Format

- Model your reply on the format used in the invitation or letter. If it is handwritten, handwrite your reply. If letterhead stationery is used, reply on your letterhead. If the invitation is e-mailed, e-mail your acceptance. When the language of the invitation is informal, your reply is also informal. When replying to a formal invitation, use nearly the same words, layout, and style as the invitation:

Mr. and Mrs. Masterson Finsbury  
 request the pleasure of  
 Mr. and Mrs. Edward Bloomfield’s company  
 at a dinner-dance  
 on Saturday, the seventh of February  
 at eight o’clock  
 Gideon Country Club

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Bloomfield  
 accept with pleasure  
 the kind invitation of  
 Mr. and Mrs. Masterson Finsbury

to a dinner-dance  
on Saturday, the seventh of February  
at eight o'clock  
Gideon Country Club

## WORDS

accept	gratifying	satisfying	touched
approve	pleased	thoughtful	welcome
certainly	pleasure	thrilled	willing
delighted			

## PHRASES

able to say yes	I am pleased/ happy/honored to
accept with pleasure	accept
agree to	it is with great pleasure that
glad to be able to vote yes	it was so thoughtful of you to
happy to let you know	it will be a pleasure to
pleased to have been invited	we are sincerely happy to join you
thank you for asking me to	we have accepted your bid of
thank you for nominating me for	we look forward with pleasure
we are delighted to accept	

## SENTENCES

After reviewing your application, we are pleased to be able to offer you the funding requested.

I accept with pleasure the position of senior research chemist.

I am happy to be able to do this.

I appreciate very much (and accept) your generous apology.

I'll be happy to meet with you in your office March 11 at 10:30 to plan this year's All-City Science Fair.

In a word, absolutely!

In response to your letter asking for support for the Foscari Children's Home, I'm enclosing a check for \$500.

Thank you for inviting me to speak at the Chang-Ch'un Meditation Center next month.

We accept your kind invitation with great pleasure.

We are happy to accept your estimate for refinishing our Queen Anne dining room suite.

We are pleased to grant you the six-week extension you requested to complete your work.

We are pleased to tell you that your application for admission to the Emmet School has been approved.

We look forward to working with you.

## PARAGRAPHS

I will be delighted to have dinner with you on Friday, the sixteenth of March, at seven o'clock. Thanks so much for asking me. I can hardly wait to see you and Anders again.

Thanks for telling me how much the children at St. Joseph's Home liked my storytelling the other night. I'm happy to accept your invitation to become a regular volunteer and tell stories every other Thursday evening. Do you have a record player or tape deck so that I could use music with some of the stories?

I'm looking forward to your graduation and the reception afterwards. Thanks for including me.

Your bid of \$6,780 to wallpaper our reception rooms has been accepted. Please read the enclosed contract and call with any questions. We were impressed with the attention to detail in your proposal and bid, and we are looking forward to your work.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Selina,

Vickers and I accept with pleasure your kind invitation to a celebration of your parents' fiftieth wedding anniversary on Saturday, July 16, at 7:30 p.m.

Sincerely,

Dear Dr. Cheesewright:

Thank you for inviting me to speak at your county dental society's dinner banquet on October 26 at 7:00. I am happy to accept and will, as you suggested, discuss new patient education strategies.

I'm not sure how much time you have allotted me—will you let me know?

With best wishes,

Dear Ms. Thirkell,

I am pleased to accept your offer of the position of assistant director of the Gilbert Tebben Working Family Center.

I enjoyed the discussions with you, and I look forward to being part of this dynamic and important community resource.

The salary, hours, responsibilities, and starting date that we discussed during our last meeting are all agreeable to me. I understand that I will receive the standard benefits package, with the addition of two weeks' vacation during my first year.

Sincerely yours,

Laurence Dean

Dear Dr. Bennett,

I would be most happy to perform twenty minutes of magic tricks at the Five Towns Children's Hospital annual fair to be held on Saturday, November 8. As the date approaches, we can discuss details.

All the best,

Anna Tellwright

Dear Mr. Grandby:

We are pleased to accept for publication your self-help book, tentatively entitled *Don't Give Up*. All of us are excited about its possibilities.

Enclosed are guidelines from the production editor to help you prepare the final manuscript. Also enclosed is a preliminary draft of the book contract. Please look it over, and I will call next week to discuss it.

Sincerely yours,

Dear Ms. Unwin:

Congratulations! Your franchise application has been approved. Welcome to the Sunshine family.

Enclosed is the contract, which we suggest you discuss with your attorney, and a packet of informational materials.

Please call this office to set up an appointment to discuss any questions.



Sincerely,

Dear Violet,

Yes! I will be delighted to stay with the twins while you and Gordon take the horses to the state fair. A week is *not* too long for me. And thanks for the offer of the plane ticket—I accept with pleasure.

Love,

Dear Mr. Van Druten,

In response to your letter of February 10, we are pleased to grant you a two-month extension of the loan of the slides showing scenes of our amusement park. We appreciate being able to help you add, as you said, “a bit of amusement” to your corporate meetings.

We offer this extension with our compliments.

Cordially,

Laura Simmons

Dear Richard,

I will be happy to write you a letter of reference, and I’m delighted that you thought to ask me. You were one of my favorite students, and I’ll enjoy explaining just why to Forey, Harley and Wentworth.

Yours truly,

Mr. Clarence Rochester

accepts with pleasure

William Portlaw and Alida Ascott’s

kind invitation to dinner

on the sixteenth of June at 7:30 p.m.

but regrets that

Dr. Maggie Campion

will be absent at that time.

See also: REFUSALS, RESPONSES.

# Acknowledgments and Confirmations

*Life is not so short but that there is always time enough for courtesy.*

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Letters of acknowledgment and letters of confirmation resemble each other. The letter of acknowledgment says, “I received your letter (telephone call, gift, materials).” The letter of confirmation says, “I received your letter (message, contract) and we agree about the matter”; this letter can serve as an informal contract.

Sometimes a letter of acknowledgment also serves as a “thank you.” Or it says you received the message or materials but will respond later, or that you passed them on to the appropriate person. Sometimes, too, “acknowledgment” letters are really sales letters that use the excuse of acknowledging something (an order, a payment) to present an additional sales message.

You always acknowledge expressions of condolence. You generally acknowledge anniversary or birthday greetings, congratulations, apologies, or divorce announcements.

## Acknowledge or Confirm

- anniversary/birthday greetings
- apologies
- complaints
- condolences
- congratulations
- divorce announcements
- documents/reports/files/materials received
- gifts (thank-you note to follow)
- information received
- inquiries/requests (will respond as soon as possible)
- letters from constituents
- letters of introduction
- letters received (action underway, will let you know)

- mail in supervisor's absence (assistant writes that message/letter has been received and will be dealt with later)
- manuscripts (under consideration, will give decision later)
- oral agreements, telephone discussions/agreements
- orders (see also ORDERS)
- payments
- proposals
- receipt of orders/merchandise (see also ORDERS)
- receipt of wedding gifts (see WEDDINGS)
- reports
- reservations, speaking dates, invitation times
- sympathy messages

### How to Say It

- State precisely (reservation, amount, letter, order) what you are acknowledging or confirming.
- Refer to the date and occasion of your last contact (telephone conversation, previous letter, in-person discussion).
- Describe what action, if any, is being taken.
- Tell when the reader will hear further from you or from someone else.
- If indicated, explain why you are not able to respond fully to the letter/request/gift at the moment.
- Express appreciation for the previous contact, for the kindness of the person in writing you, or for the business.
- Close with a courtesy or forward-looking statement.

### What Not to Say

- Don't belabor explanations; letters of acknowledgment and confirmation are brief.
- Avoid a negative tone ("thought I'd make sure we're both talking about the same thing"). Repeat matter-of-factly the details of the items you're acknowledging or confirming.

### Tips on Writing

- Write promptly. Acknowledgments are, by their very nature, sent immediately. One exception is acknowledging expressions of sympathy. Because of the hardships involved, responses may be sent up to six weeks later. Or, a close relative of the bereaved may write the acknowledgment: "Mother asked me to tell you how much she appre-

ciated the loving letter of sympathy and the memorial you sent for Dad. She will be in touch with you as soon as she is able to.”

## Special Situations

- When a letterwriter asks about an issue better handled by someone else, acknowledge the letter and provide the name, address, and telephone number of the appropriate person. You can also forward the letter to the proper department and so notify your correspondent.

- Timely and regular business transactions need no acknowledgment: orders are received, merchandise is delivered, payments are sent. You would, however, acknowledge receipt in unusual situations. If the previous order went astray, you will want the sender to know that this one arrived. When you receive payment from someone to whom you’ve been sending collection letters, let the person know that payment has been received (and, by implication, that there will be no more collection letters). Acknowledge large or important payments, orders, and shipments—or those from first-time customers or suppliers. Acknowledge letters, requests, orders, manuscript submissions, or complaints that cannot be responded to immediately so that the person knows that action is being taken.

- Acknowledge mail that arrives in a supervisor’s or co-worker’s absence. Mention the absence without offering apologies or explanations. Do not refer to the contents of the letter; an exception is made for the announcement of a death or serious illness. Express sympathy on behalf of the other person and say that a letter will follow as soon as possible.

- Organizations receiving memorial donations acknowledge receipt of the contribution and also notify the family so it can thank the donor personally.

- Domestic hotel and motel reservations are often made and confirmed entirely by phone. Occasionally, however, written confirmation is necessary because of special conditions or changes of plans. Include your requirements: date, length of stay, kind of accommodation, price, extras requested (crib in a room, for example), wheelchair accessibility, availability of pool, HBO, entertaining facilities. Request written confirmation from foreign hotels or resorts. Include an International Reply Coupon (IRC) for any response or include your e-mail address or fax number.

- If someone announces a divorce, avoid expressing either congratulations or sympathy (unless you know which is called for); in most cases, simply acknowledge the information.

- An apology is acknowledged to let the other person know that you have received it (and accepted it, if that is the case).

- If you cannot respond to a proposal, report, or manuscript right

away, acknowledge its receipt to the sender and assure the person that you will communicate further as soon as you have evaluated it. People spend time writing reports, proposals, and manuscripts and are naturally eager for results. They will wait more patiently if their mailing has been acknowledged.

- When you cannot make an immediate decision among job applicants, acknowledge receipt of their applications or résumés or thank them for their interviews. Tell them you will let them know as soon as a decision has been made. (If you have an idea of when this will be, say so.) Thank them for their interest in your organization.

## Format

- Routine acknowledgments and confirmations (receipt of applications, manuscripts, requests, payments) can be handled with preprinted cards or a simple form letter. Fill in the item received and the date of receipt.

- For numerous wedding gifts or expressions of sympathy, send printed acknowledgment cards indicating that you'll respond soon. In the case of a public figure whose death inspires many messages of sympathy from people unknown to the family or deceased, printed or engraved cards or foldovers are sent (with no personal follow-up).

- Use e-mail for routine acknowledgments and confirmations. For business records, keep hard copies or back-up file copies of these transactions.

- For complicated business acknowledgments or confirmations, use letterhead stationery or memo paper.

- Personal acknowledgments and confirmations are handwritten on informal personal stationery; e-mail can be used for casual situations.

## WORDS

accept	approve	ensure	reassure
acknowledge	assure	indicate	receipt
affirm	confirm	notice	reply
agreed-upon	corroborate	notify	respond
appreciate	endorse	reaffirm	settle

## PHRASES

as I mentioned on the phone

thank you for the package that

as we agreed yesterday	this will acknowledge the receipt of
I enjoyed our conversation of	to confirm our recent conversation
in response to your letter	want to confirm in writing
I sincerely appreciated	we have received
look forward to continuing our discussion	will respond as soon as

## SENTENCES

I enjoyed speaking with you this afternoon and look forward to our meeting next Thursday at 2:30 at your office.

Just a note to let you know that the printer ribbons arrived.

Thank you for remembering my ten-year anniversary with Lamb and Company.

Thank you for the wallpaper samples, which arrived this morning.

Thank you for writing me with your views on socialized medicine.

Thank you for your order, which we received yesterday; it will be shipped to you this week.

The family of Annis Gething gratefully acknowledges your kind and comforting expressions of sympathy.

The members of the Board of Directors and I appreciated your presentation yesterday and want you to know that we are taking your concerns under serious advisement.

This is to acknowledge receipt of the rerouted shipment of Doncastle tennis rackets, catalog number AE-78573.

This is to confirm our recent conversation about the identification and removal of several underground storage tanks on my property.

This will acknowledge receipt of your report on current voter attitudes.

This will confirm our revised delivery date of November 6.

We are proceeding with the work as requested by Jerome Searing in his May 3, 2002, telephone call.

We hereby acknowledge that an inspection of the storm drain and street construction installed by the Bagshaw Company in the Rockingham subdivision has been completed.

## PARAGRAPHS

Your letter of July 16 has been referred for review and appropriate action. We value you as a customer and ask your patience while a response is being prepared.

Thank you for the update on the preparation of the Price-Stables contract. I appreciate knowing what progress you're making.

Thank you for your workshop proposal, which we have just received. Ms. Bramber is out of the office for the next two weeks but will contact you soon after she returns.

Thanks for the samples. As soon as we've had a chance to get them under the microscope and run some tests, we'll let you know what we find.

I've received your kind invitation to join the Friends of the Library committee. I need to review other commitments to be sure that I can devote as much time to the Friends as I'd like. I'll let you know next week. In the meantime, thanks for thinking of me.

The information you sent was exactly what I needed. It will take several weeks to reach a decision, but I'll call as soon as I do. In the meantime, thanks for your promptness.

Thanks for the call this morning, Janet. I'll see you on May 23 at 10:00 a.m. and will bring the spring lists with me.

I wanted you to know that I received your letter this morning, but as I'm leaving for Dallas later today I won't have time to look into the billing problem with the contractor for another week or so. If you need action sooner than that, give Agnes Laiter a call.

I'm glad we were able to reach an agreement on the telephone this morning. I'll have the contracts retyped—inserting the new delivery date of March 16, 2003, and the new metric ton rate of \$55—and sent to you by the end of the week.

Thank you for telling me about the divorce. It's been too long since I've seen you. Can we get together sometime? How about breakfast Saturday morning? That used to work for us.

Thank you for your letter of June 9, describing the employee behavior you encountered on three different visits to our store. We are looking into the situation, and will let you know what we find. In the meantime, please accept our apologies for any embarrassment or unpleasantness you experienced.

Thank you for your letter of application and your résumé. We have received numerous responses to our advertisement, which means you may not hear from us immediately. Beginning March 1 we will call qualified applicants to arrange interviews.

We received your request for information on estrogen replacement therapy and for a sample of the placebo skin patch. Because of the enthusiastic response to our advertisement, we have temporarily exhausted

our supplies of the skin patch. I'm enclosing the literature you requested, and will send the skin patch in approximately two weeks.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Edna Bunthorne:

This will acknowledge your letter of August 6 addressed to Francis Moulton. Mr. Moulton is on a six-month medical leave of absence, and his interim replacement has not yet been named.

I am enclosing materials that will answer some of your questions, and I will refer the others to the new director as soon as possible.

If the delay is unacceptable to you, you may want to contact Kate Croy at the Lowder Foundation.

Sincerely,

Dear Professor Erlin:

Thank you for your paper, "The Rise and the Fall of the Supercomputer," which we received this week. Because of an overwhelming response to our call for symposium papers, our editorial staff will not be able to respond within the usual two to three weeks. It may be five to six weeks before you hear from us. Thanks for understanding.

Yours truly,

Dear Member,

Thank you for your order.

Unfortunately, we're temporarily out of stock on the item below. We've reordered it and expect to have a new supply in a few weeks. We'll ship it as soon as it arrives.

Sincerely,

Dear Dr. Breeve,

This is to confirm that you have permission to use the Great Organ of St. Luke's Church for an organ recital March 30 at 7:30 p.m. As agreed, you will be responsible for the expense of any organ repairs necessary for the recital.

Please call me to arrange for an extra key when you need to begin practicing.

We're delighted that someone of your talent will be using our wonderful old—but often forgotten—organ.

With best wishes,

Dear Geraldine Dabis:

We have received your loan application and will process it as quickly



as possible. However, because of the complex nature of the application, it is being reviewed and evaluated by loan officers from two different divisions. This may delay our response somewhat.

If you have questions about the delay or about our process, please call me at 555-1216.

Yours truly,

See also: ACCEPTANCES, APPOINTMENTS, FOLLOW-UP, RESPONSES, SALES, THANK YOU, TRAVEL, WEDDINGS.

# Letters of Adjustment

*A reputation for handling customer claims quickly and fairly is a powerful public relations tool for any firm.*

—L. SUE BAUGH, MARIDELL FRYAR, DAVID THOMAS

Write a letter of adjustment in response to a customer's letter of complaint (also called a claims letter). Business imperfections—incorrect bills, damaged merchandise, late payments—are not as rare as we'd like. In most instances, adjustments are handled routinely. "Keeping an old customer is just as important as gaining a new one." (N.H. and S.K. Mager)

An adjustment letter serves to (1) correct errors and make good on company inadequacies; (2) grant reasonable full or partial adjustments in order to maintain good customer relations; or (3) deny unwarranted claims so tactfully that the customer's goodwill is retained.

In his classic *Handbook of Business Letters*, L.E. Frailey advises treating a complaint with as much respect as an order, letting customers know you are as eager to serve them as to sell them.

"Every unhappy customer will tell ten others about a bad experience, whereas happy customers may tell three." (Lillian Vernon)

The only thing worse than customers who complain are customers who don't complain—and take their business elsewhere. A claims letter gives you the opportunity to win the customer back. You will know when you have written a good letter of adjustment because the customer will return.

(To request an adjustment, see COMPLAINTS; this chapter deals only with making them.)

## Kinds of Adjustment Letters

- billing/invoice errors
- credit
- damages
- exchanges
- explanations: oversight/error
- newspaper corrections
- refunds/discounts
- refusing to make (see REFUSALS)

- repairing damages
- replacements
- time extensions

### How to Say It

- Open with a cordial statement (“Thank you for your letter of June 3”), a thank you for bringing the matter to your attention, or a sentiment such as “We were sorry to hear that...”
- Refer to the error, specifying dates, amounts, invoice numbers.
- If the customer was correct, say so.
- State your regret about the confusion, mix-up, or error.
- Explain your company’s policy of dealing with customer claims, if appropriate.
- Describe how you will resolve the problem or what you’ve already done. Sometimes you give customers the choice of a replacement, a refund, or a credit to their account.
- Mention when you expect the problem to be resolved, even if it is only “immediately,” “at once,” or “as soon as possible.”
- Reassure the customer: this error is rare; you do not expect a repeat occurrence of it; the company works hard to satisfy customers.
- Close by acknowledging the customer’s patience, asking for continued customer loyalty, offering further cooperation, reaffirming the company’s good intentions and the value of its products, or expressing your expectation that the customer will continue to enjoy your services and products for years to come.

### What Not to Say

- Don’t use the words “claim” or “complaint” even though that’s how these incoming letters are commonly identified. To customers, the terms sound accusatory and judgmental, and the majority of them honestly believe they are due an adjustment. Instead of “The damage that you claim was due to improper packing” or “Your complaint has been received,” substitute a word like “report” for “claim” and “complaint.”
- Don’t say how “surprised” you are (“I can’t believe this happened”; “Not once in twenty years have we encountered this problem”)—unless it truly is an exceptional occurrence. Customers assume that if the error happened to them, it could happen (and probably has) to anyone. You lose credibility.
- Don’t repeat all the details of a problem or overemphasize it. A passing reference is sufficient. Focus on the solution rather than on the error. You want the latter to quickly become a vague memory for the customer.

- Avoid long explanations. Customers generally don't care about your difficulties with suppliers, employees, or shippers; they simply want an adjustment. Restrict your explanation, if you wish to include one, to several words ("due to a delayed shipment" or "because of power outages last week").
- Don't be excessively apologetic. A simple "We regret the error" is adequate for most slip-ups.
- Don't blame "computer error." By now people know that human beings run the computers, not vice versa, and this weak and obviously untrue excuse irritates people. And don't imply that these things are bound to happen from time to time. Although this may be true, it makes your company look careless.
- Don't make an adjustment grudgingly, angrily, impatiently, or condescendingly, and don't imply that you're doing the customer a big favor. This cancels the positive public relations effect of righting the error. Make your adjustment graciously or at least matter-of-factly even when the customer is angry or rude. Your attitude must be friendly and understanding; the "high road" leads to goodwill and customer satisfaction.
- Don't end your letter by mentioning the problem ("Again, we are so sorry that our Great Southwest Hiking Holiday was such an unpleasant experience for you") because it leaves the problem, not your goodwill and adjustment, uppermost in the reader's mind.
- Don't overstate company culpability or indicate in writing that the company was negligent. When negligence is involved, your lawyer can suggest the best approach for your letter.

## Tips on Writing

- Respond promptly; this establishes your good intentions.
- Be specific: about the problem, about the steps you are taking, about what the customer can expect in the future. Vagueness leaves customers expecting more than is offered and unhappy when they don't get it.
  - Assume responsibility when appropriate. Use the active voice ("We sent the wrong monitor") rather than the passive voice ("The wrong monitor was sent to you").
  - When the customer has been inconvenienced, be generous with your sympathy. Sometimes out of fear that the customer will "take advantage" of such openness, businesses fail to give customers their due—and then pay for it in reduced customer satisfaction.
  - In some cases, add a goodwill gesture: a discount coupon or gift certificate, or a reduction on the next order.
  - Adjustment letters are easier to write when your company has a codified strategy for managing customer complaints. You can then

follow and appeal to policy and handle similar situations evenhandedly; you will not have to reinvent the wheel for each claims letter.

- Old but still good advice: “Legalistic quibbles have no place in the answer to a complaint. The customer is rightly or wrongly dissatisfied; business is built only on satisfied customers. Therefore the question is not to prove who is right but to satisfy the customer. This doctrine has its limitations, but it is safer to err in the way of doing too much than in doing too little.” (Mary Owens Crowther, *The Book of Letters*, 1923)

- An excellent resource for those who write letters of adjustment is Cheryl McLean, *Customer Service Letters Ready to Go!*, MTC Business Books, 1996.

## Special Situations

- Some problems are partly or wholly the customer’s fault (failure to read installation instructions, excessive or inappropriate use). If you decide to grant the adjustment (most companies give customers the benefit of the doubt), don’t assign blame to the customer; it undoes the goodwill you are establishing. When neither the company nor the customer is completely at fault, suggest a compromise adjustment or offer several solutions (“Because this item is not manufactured to be fire-resistant, we cannot offer you an exact exchange, but we would be glad to replace the fielder’s glove at our wholesale cost, offer you a 30% discount on your next purchase, or repair the fire-damaged nylon mesh back”). “A compromise is the art of dividing a cake in such a way that everyone believes that he or she has got the biggest piece.” (Ludwig Erhard)

- When you deny the requested adjustment (a complete refund, for example), explain why: an investigation of the matter did not support it (include documents or itemize findings); standard company policy does not allow it (and violating the policy in this case is not possible); the item is no longer under warranty; the item was used in a specifically prohibited manner. Be gracious but firm. Express your sympathy for the customer’s point of view, explain that their letter was considered carefully, appeal to their sense of fair play, and close with a positive statement (expressing your appreciation of past business and cooperation, offering a coupon, saying that this was a difficult letter to write but the only response consistent with your values of fairness and responsibility).

- Before mailing a product recall notice, consult with your attorney since the wording is important. Most recalls are announced in a form letter that describes the recalled product, tells what the problem is, and explains how the consumer can receive an adjustment, replacement, or refund.

## Format

- Adjustment letters dealing with nonroutine problems are typed on letterhead stationery. For routine adjustment matters, use a half-sheet size memo or form letter with blanks to insert the details.
- Small companies may return a copy of the customer's letter with a handwritten note: "We apologize for the error. Enclosed is a check for the difference."
- If you learn of the problem by e-mail or fax, respond that way.

## WORDS

accommodate	correct	refund	replace
amend	credit	regulate	return
apologize	rebate	reimburse	satisfaction
arrange	rectify	remedy	settle
compensate	redress	repair	solution

## PHRASES

appreciate your pointing out	reduce the price
corrected invoice/ statement/bill	sincerely sorry to hear that
greatly regret your dissatisfaction	sorry for the inconvenience/ misunderstanding
I'm sorry to learn that	sorry to learn that
make amends for	until you are completely satisfied
our apologies	will receive immediate credit
please disregard	you are correct in stating that
prevent a recurrence	

## SENTENCES

I'm sorry about the error in filling your order—the correct posters are being shipped today.

Thank you for bringing to our attention the missing steel pole in the tetherball set you ordered from us.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to correct the erroneous information published in the last issue of Tallboys' Direct Mail Marketer.

Thank you for your telephone call about the defective laser labels—you will receive replacement labels within two to three business days.

We appreciate the difficulties you have had with your Deemster Steam Iron, but all our appliances carry large-print, bright-colored tags alerting consumers to the safety feature of the polarized plug (one blade is wider than the other and the plug fits into a polarized outlet only one way).

We are pleased to offer you an additional two weeks, interest-free, to complete payment on your formal-wear rental.

We hope to continue to serve your banking needs.

We regret the difficulties you had with your last toner cartridge.

We're sorry you had to write; this should have been taken care of some time ago.

We were sorry to learn that you are dissatisfied with the performance of your Salten personal paper shredder.

Your business and goodwill are important to us.

You're right, the self-repairing zippers on your Carradine Brent Luggage should not have seized up after only two months' use.

You will receive immediate credit for the faulty masonry work, and we will send someone to discuss replacing it.

## PARAGRAPHS

Thank you for responding to our recall notices and returning the Small World farm set to us for a refund. Small World has been making quality toys for children since 1976, and we regret the design error that made this set potentially dangerous to young children.

Thank you for calling to our attention the pricing error on our Bluewater automatic pool cleaners. Enclosed is a check for the difference. We look forward to serving you again.

Thank you for your telephone call. You are correct in thinking that you should not have been charged interest this past month. We have credited \$2.85 to your account.

After carefully reading your letter of August 4, I consulted our shipping department. It appears that we did comply with the terms of the contract (documents enclosed).

I am sorry that your order was filled incorrectly. Enclosed are the back issues that you ordered. Please keep the others with our apologies.

Thank you for taking the time to let us know of your recent experience with one of our products. We are always interested in hearing from our customers but regret that it was this type of occurrence that prompted your letter.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Mr. Stefanopoulos:

Thank you for your letter requesting a correction of several statements that appeared about you and your company in the most recent issue of *Small Business Today*. The information we were given was not double-checked; we apologize.

The correction appears on page 4 of this month's issue.

Sincerely,

Dear Eva Steer:

I am sorry that the Irish linens you purchased from us proved to be flawed.

Please return the order to us, complete with packaging. We will replace it at once and also refund your mailing costs.

I notice that you have been a loyal customer for the past eight years, so you know that our quality control people don't let something like this happen very often. I'm enclosing a discount good for 20% off your next order as our way of apologizing for your inconvenience.

Best regards,

Dear Gabriel Bagradian,

Thank you for your letter of July 7, appealing the \$50 charge for the non-emergency use of the Werfel Community Hospital emergency room.

A review of the records shows that your son Stephan visited the emergency room on March 19 with a collapsed lung, not for treatment of acne. We regret the error that was made in coding the reason for the visit and have made an adjustment to your account.

We appreciate your spotting the error and letting us know about it so courteously.

Sincerely,

T. Haigasun

Billing Department

Dear Mrs. Painter,

Thank you for telling us about the infestation in our Wheatley cereal. We are sorry you had this experience and want you to know we share your concern.

Consumer satisfaction is most important to us, and we sincerely regret your recent experience with our product. Our company has strict standards of quality control. We carefully examine each lot of raw materials when it arrives. Sanitarians inspect our manufacturing plant continually and, in addition, make periodic checks of our suppliers' fa-



cilities. Food samples are collected all through the manufacturing process and are analyzed in our laboratories. We enforce these stringent procedures to ensure the production of high-quality, insect-free products.

The information you gave us about our product is being brought to the attention of the appropriate company officials.

Again, thank you for writing.

Yours truly,

Dear Mr. Steinmetz,

No, the motor on your vacuum should not have “worn out” six months after you purchased it. We can’t be sure what the problem is, but this is unusual for our top-of-the-line Costello vacuum.

Please take the vacuum to one of our repair shops (see attached list to find the one closest to you). The personnel there will examine the machine and if they can repair it, they will do so and bill us. If they find that the machine is defective, we will arrange to have a replacement shipped to you.

Please accept our apologies for the inconvenience this has caused you.

Dear Mr. Ramsdell:

Re: Claim 02018-1134 WB 753

Enclosed is a check in full settlement of your claim.

Because Shipper’s Transit Insurance was not purchased, the carrier’s liability is limited to \$1.25 per pound times the weight of the load. This conforms with tariff regulations.

To obtain full reimbursement for damages or loss you must file a claim with your corporation traffic department or its insurance carrier. Please check with them about this.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation during the necessary delays in processing your claim.

Sincerely,

Dear Mr. Magnus,

We were unhappy to hear that you felt the installation of your fiber-optical cable was “sloppily done” and the electricians “unprofessional.”

We now have the report of two inspectors, one from our company and one from an independent oversight bureau, who visited your offices on November 11 and 12. Their evaluations indicate that the installation was meticulously done, that code standards were met or exceeded, that site cleanup was faultless, and that, in fact, there was no findable cause for objection.

Interviews with your staff members who had contact with the electricians turned up no negative information about their behavior.

In the light of these reports, we are unable to offer you the requested deep discount on our services.

See also: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, APOLOGIES, BELATED,  
COMPLAINTS, CREDIT, REFUSALS, RESPONSES.

# Advice

*Advice...is a habit-forming drug. You give a dear friend a bit of advice today, and next week you find yourself advising two or three friends, and the week after, a dozen, and the week following, crowds!*

—CAROLYN WELLS

Ask for advice only when you are open to it, not when you already know the “advice” you want to receive. That isn’t fair to the person who spends time on a response. In addition, you may be unpleasantly surprised.

If you are the advice-giver, respond only to the issues raised by the other person; don’t venture further afield.

If you have not been asked for advice, you are on shaky ground to volunteer it. “It is well enough when one is talking to a friend to hedge in an odd word by way of counsel now and then, but there is something mighty irksome, in its staring upon one in a letter where one ought only to see kind words and friendly remembrances.” (Mary Lamb)

In general, give advice only when you have been sincerely asked for it.

## Kinds of Letters Dealing with Advice

- asking for/requesting
- giving unsolicited
- offering suggestions
- rejecting
- responding to request for
- thanking for

## How to Say It

- To ask for advice, briefly outline the issue. Tell what you expect from the other person and perhaps why you chose them in this situation. If you need the advice by a deadline, say so. Reassure them that they are not obliged to respond. Thank them for being available to you.
- To give advice, begin by rephrasing the other person’s request (“You asked my advice about your college plans”) or by explaining why

you are writing (something came across your desk you thought might be of interest, or you had an idea that might be useful). State your opinion, advice, or suggestion. Explain your reasoning, if necessary. Tell what, if any, action you think the person might take. Include a disclaimer: “this is only my opinion,” “I know you will use your own good judgment,” “just an idea...” Finally, assure your reader of your confidence that they will make a good decision, deal with the situation, succeed at any task.

- To thank someone for advice, express your gratitude as you would for any gift, but tell how the advice was useful to you. If you didn’t take the advice, thank the person for their time, effort, and concern. When you receive inappropriate or unwanted advice, assume—for politeness’ sake—that they meant well and acknowledge their attention.

### What Not to Say

- Don’t over-explain. Outline your suggestion or course of action in a few sentences. “Whatever advice you give, be short.” (Horace) Brevity is difficult in a letter giving advice. We are tempted to offer all the wisdom accumulated over a lifetime. Resist. After writing your letter, delete half of it. The person who wants to know more will ask.
- Avoid “should” as in “I think you should...” No one can say what anyone else “should” or “ought to” do. Find a more flexible way of phrasing your suggestion.
- Don’t imply that you’ve found the one, correct answer. Offer instead alternatives, possibilities, fresh approaches.

### Tips on Writing

- When giving advice, use tact, tact, and more tact. Read your letter as though it had been sent to you. How does it make you feel? Have someone read it to make sure it isn’t abrasive or patronizing. “Advice is like snow; the softer it falls, the longer it dwells upon, and the deeper it sinks into the mind.” (Samuel Taylor Coleridge)

- Start with a compliment or upbeat remark to frame your advice in a positive context.

- Be specific. “Get a grip!” or “Shape up!” or “Try harder!” is not advice. Mignon McLaughlin wrote: “‘Pull yourself together’ is seldom said to anyone who can.” When possible, include names and telephone numbers of resources, costs of what you’re recommending, clear-cut steps to the goal.

- When possible, attribute the advice to someone else. Especially when your advice is unsolicited, consider getting another person to

offer the advice you want to give. Advice that is unwelcome from a parent is often accepted from a third party. Advice from a superior may be better received from a colleague—or vice versa.

- When giving unsolicited advice, be respectful and low-key, mildly suggesting that this is something the person might want to think about. In this instance, passive voice or indirect phrasing is useful (“If the loans could be consolidated” instead of “If you would consolidate your loans”). An intermediate step might be to write, “I noticed that...” or “Do you need any help?” and, without giving advice then and there, indicate that you are willing to do so.

## Special Situations

- Letters giving professional advice (a lawyer advising a client, a doctor outlining a program of patient health care, a teacher suggesting tests for a child) is written much more carefully than most advice letters. The advice must be professionally defensible and might include references or sources for the advice. Keep copies of the letter (and sometimes send them to third parties). On occasion, another person’s opinion may be needed to reinforce the advice and protect yourself. Ours is a litigious society; good Samaritans enjoy no protection under the law for their good works and intentions.

- If you request advice about investing money or about a situation with significant consequences, emphasize that the other person will not be held responsible for the outcome. With a written absolution, the recipient might feel easier about giving advice. You get what you pay for, however, and you might be better off seeing a professional (financial counselor, psychologist, lawyer, realtor).

- If your first letter of advice is ignored or poorly received, let it be your last letter of advice to that person. “The true secret of giving advice is, after you have honestly given it, to be perfectly indifferent whether it is taken or not, and never persist in trying to set people right.” (Hannah Whitall Smith)

- Don’t give advice warning against individuals, companies, or products; you could create legal problems for yourself. It’s generally not a problem to recommend a person or an organization although, if you are a public figure, you might get asked pretty smartly to explain why you didn’t mention certain others.

## Format

- Use letterhead stationery to write a business associate outside the firm, memo paper or letterhead to write someone inside the firm, and informal stationery for social relationships.

- The choice of a handwritten or typewritten letter of advice can set the tone of your letter. A handwritten note to an employee might be perceived as too personal and a bit apologetic, where the typewritten message appears objective and matter-of-fact. On the other hand, writing a personal note in some sensitive business situations indicates that you are writing as a friend as well as a customer, client, or supervisor.

## WORDS

advantageous	consult	f o r e - thought	precaution	suitable
advisable	counsel	guidance	principle	urge
advocate	debate	guidelines	prudent	useful
appropriate	desirable	insight	rational	valuable
apt	direction	i n s t r u c - tions	reasonable	warn
beneficial	encourage	o p e n - minded	r e c o m - mend	weigh
careful	examine	opinion	resource	wisdom
caution	expedient	persuade	sensible	w o r t h - while
consider	fitting	practical	study	

## PHRASES

alert you to the possibility	look into
as I understand it	might want to
backseat driver	piece of advice
compare notes	so far as I know
consider carefully	speak for
I am convinced that	take care of
I don't like to interfere, but	take into account
I feel/assume/presume/think	take it amiss/the wrong way
I have the impression that	take to heart
if you don't mind	think about
in my estimation/judgment/	think through

opinion/view	to my way of thinking
I noticed that	to the best of my knowledge
I take it that	weigh both courses of action
it seems to me	what you could do
just wanted to suggest/ recommend	whether you take my advice or not
keep a lookout for/an eye on	you've probably already thought of
kick around this idea	this, but

## SENTENCES

Although I liked what you wrote about switching your major from Physics to Astronomy, I have a suggestion you might want to consider.

Do you have any advice about how I can raise morale in the Accounting Department?

Ever since you asked my opinion about the Middlemarch line, I've been mulling over the situation, weighing the benefits against the rather considerable cost.

I don't usually give unsolicited advice, but this seems to me to be a special case.

I hope this is the sort of advice you wanted.

I'm considering a switch from the technical to the management ladder—do you have any wise, helpful words for me?

I'm writing to you for advice.

I thought I should mention this.

I took your excellent advice and I'm grateful.

I will appreciate any comments or advice you'd care to give.

I would be grateful for your frank opinion about our registering Jermyn for kindergarten this year (he won't be five yet) instead of waiting another year.

I wouldn't ordinarily presume to tell you your business, but I'm concerned.

Thank you for your unerring advice about our hot rolling equipment—we're back on schedule.

There is one thing you might want to consider.

We are unable to take your advice just now, but we're grateful to you for thinking of us.

Would you be willing to tell me quite frankly and confidentially what you think about my interpersonal skills?

You asked for my opinion about switching service providers—here it is.  
You must, of course, use your own judgment, but I would suggest this.  
Your counsel and advice have meant a great deal to me.  
Your idea is excellent and I may regret not going that route, but I'm going to try something else first.  
You were kind enough to ask my advice about the Hexam-Riderhood merger—this is what I think.

## PARAGRAPHS

You asked what I thought of the new store hours. They are certainly more convenient for customers and will bring us the early evening business that can make a difference in our year-end numbers. However, I wonder if it is profitable to stay open so late on Saturday evenings. Could we keep a record of Saturday evening sales for a month?

We suggest that, instead of external motors and vacuum seals around the drive-shafts, you install internal, pancake motors to handle the required tension ranges. Let us know if this takes care of the problem.

You might want to hire an investment banking firm to help with your financial restructuring. Such a firm can assist you in exploring strategic alternatives to rebuild your liquidity and improve value for shareholders.

Have you noticed that the newsletter is not carrying its own weight? I wonder if we ought to continue to subsidize it. I suggest we put it on a subscription basis. This will also oblige it to become more responsive to readers, one of the current complaints being that it isn't. If it can't survive on the income from subscriptions, I question its necessity.

I would like to suggest that you examine the issue of cooperation versus competition in the school environment. In the three years our children have been students here, I've noticed the school is strongly oriented toward competition, with little value assigned to cooperative learning, cooperative sports, and cooperative activities. I'm enclosing several reports and studies on this issue. May I stop in and speak to you about this next week?

I'm flattered that you want my advice on choosing a college. However, you seem interested in the eastern colleges, and I know little about them. I wonder if you wouldn't want to talk to Ling Ch'ung, who in fact knows quite a bit about them.

Thanks so much for your advice on the hip roof and preparing for the building inspector. I doubt if she would have given me the building permit the way I was going about things!

I'm grateful to you for the time you took to outline a solution to our current problem. We are interested in your ideas. However, we just started working on another approach last Thursday and I'm going to wait and see how that develops. I'll let you know if we are later able to



consider your plan. In the meantime, thanks for your helpful suggestions.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Mr. Brimblecombe:

I was present at the Music Educators' Conference when your elementary school jazz band performed. I was impressed to hear that out of a school population of 640, you have 580 students in your instrumental music program. This is unusual, as I'm sure you know.

Do you have any advice for other elementary music directors trying to increase the number of student musicians? If you do not have the time to respond by letter, perhaps you could indicate on the enclosed postcard a time and date when I could call you long-distance. I'd appreciate any tips you might have.

Gratefully,

Dear Walter,

I hope you will forgive this unasked-for intrusion into your business affairs, but I felt I would be less than a friend if I didn't say something after visiting one of your gift shops last week (the one on Lewis Street).

I was surprised to see the china jumbled together on the shelves, the collector's dolls looking dusty and wrinkled, and some of the figurines chipped and dirty. This hasn't seemed to hurt business—customers were lined up at both counters when I was there—but over the long term it might be unfortunate. I just wondered if you were aware of the situation.

With best wishes,

Dear Tony,

As one of our most aggressive sales representatives, you have an enviable record and I expect you will be up for an award at the end of the year. The flip side of this aggressiveness is, unfortunately, a certain abrasive attitude that has been reported by several customers lately.

I'd like to suggest two things. One, come in and talk this over with me. I can give you some idea of how people are responding to you and why it's a problem over the long term if not the short term. Two, spend a day or two with Tom Jerningham. He has a manner that is effective without being too insistent.

Let me hear from you.

Sincerely,

Dear Shreve,

We are both proud of how well you're doing in college—your grades, your job, your friends. I think we've told you often how much we love

you and admire the way you handle things. BUT...(did you know there was a “but” coming?) we are extremely concerned about one new thing in your life: cigarettes. Will you please think about what it will mean if you let this habit take hold?

I’m enclosing some literature on the subject.

We won’t nag you about this, but we had to speak up strongly at least once and say that, based on our experience, knowledge, and love for you, this is not a good choice.

Love,

Dear Marion and Leopold,

Thanks so much for driving all the way into the city just to look over the situation with the house. The decision whether to repaint or put on all new siding was really getting us down. Your advice was excellent, and we feel good about our decision. It was also wonderful to see you again!

Love,

Dear Hazel,

I appreciate your concern, and I am sure you have good reasons for feeling that we ought to move as soon as possible. However, after careful consideration of your proposal, I have decided that the situation is fairly stable at present and we should stay put.

Let me know if you have further information that would affect this decision.

Yours truly,

Dear Uncle Thorkell,

Thank you for your letter. I appreciated your advice about my earrings. I know it doesn’t seem “manly” to you, but my friends and I like earrings. I’m coming home at the end of the month for a visit, and I don’t want you to be disappointed when you see that I still have them. Although I am grateful for your concern, I am going to keep wearing earrings. I hope this won’t hurt our good relationship.

Love,

See also: EMPLOYMENT, INSTRUCTIONS, REFUSALS, REQUESTS, SENSITIVE, THANK YOU.

# Anniversaries and Birthdays

*I know a lot of people didn't expect our relationship to last—but we've just celebrated our two months' anniversary.*

—BRITT EKLAND

With the availability of attractive greeting cards today, few people send personal anniversary or birthday notes and letters. However, anyone who has received a commercial card with only a signature knows how much pleasure could have been added with a handwritten line or two. For most people, finding a letter enclosed in the card is as good as receiving a gift.

Anniversaries once referred primarily to wedding anniversaries. Today, people celebrate business, service, personal, and other anniversaries and they appreciate being remembered on their special day.

Some businesses send birthday and anniversary cards to their customers as a goodwill gesture.

## Send Letters or Cards for

- anniversary of a death
- birthday
- business goodwill (see GOODWILL)
- business or business association anniversary
- customers' birthdays or anniversaries (see SALES)
- invitations to birthday or anniversary celebrations (see INVITATIONS)
- personal achievement or service anniversary
- wedding anniversary (spouse, parents, family members, friends)

## How to Say It

- Mention the occasion (if you don't know the number of years, refer to "your service anniversary," "your birthday," or "the anniversary of Beryl's death").
- Include, whenever possible, an anecdote, a shared memory, good-hearted humor, or a sentence telling why the person is important to you.

- End with good wishes for another anniversary period or for the coming years and with assurances of your affection, love, admiration, warmth, interest, delight, pleasure, continued business support, or other appropriate sentiment.

### What Not to Say

- Don't detract from your greetings by including other information or news; remain focused on the anniversary or birthday. The exception is the newsy letter to a family member or close friend.
- Don't include "joking" references to advancing age, incapacity, passing years, the difficulties of married life, becoming a fixture at the office. Clever cracks about age and marriage and length of service may evoke reluctant smiles, but they carry little warmth. Avoid negative greeting cards that assume all 21-year-olds can hardly wait to get to a bar, that "the big 4-0" is depressing, and that 50-year-olds are over the hill.

### Tips on Writing

- Birthday or anniversary greetings can be personalized with a quotation: "The great thing about getting older is that you don't lose all the other ages you've been." (Madeleine L'Engle) "The fact was I didn't want to look my age, but I didn't want to act the age I wanted to look either. I also wanted to grow old enough to understand that sentence." (Erma Bombeck) "The marriages we regard as the happiest are those in which each of the partners believes that he or she got the best of it." (Sydney J. Harris)

- Keep a supply of greeting cards on hand. At the beginning of the year, note dates to remember on the calendar or in a computer file (the gathering of dates is time-consuming only the first time you do it). On the first of each month, choose and address cards to all those celebrating that month. On the upper right hand corner of the envelope (which will later be covered by a stamp) pencil in the date of the birthday or anniversary—and mail each one a few days before the date.

- Collect small, flat, useful gifts that can be inserted in a greeting card: handkerchiefs, bookmarks, postage stamps, lottery tickets, art postcards, dollar bills. You can also plump up a birthday or anniversary card with photographs, newspaper clippings, and recipes.

- A number of Internet sites allow you to choose and personalize greeting cards to be sent by e-mail.

## Special Situations

- Keep track of service anniversaries in your company; sending a note to mark the date creates company loyalty, especially if you add a complimentary remark about the person's work. In the case of colleagues, personalize the note with a recalled shared experience. Goodwill is also built when you remember the anniversary of your relationship with important suppliers or customers.

- Birthday and anniversary goodwill cards are sometimes sent to individual customers. William B. Dudley, financial adviser, says sending these cards is a way of keeping in touch with people; he sends more cards to people with whom he has not done business than he does to clients. "It is one way of marketing my services and keeping my name in front of people."

- In her book *The Bestseller*, Olivia Goldsmith points out, tongue-in-cheek, that it is considered bad form to wish authors on their birthdays "many happy returns" since to a writer "returns" are unsold books returned to the publisher.

- Congratulations are appreciated on the anniversary of a significant personal achievement—abstaining from smoking or drinking, for example—but only between people who know each other well.

- Write close friends and relatives who have lost someone on the anniversary of the death. Don't worry about "bringing up sad memories." In one of her columns Ann Landers wrote, "I was among those who had the mistaken notion that it was painful for family members to hear references to a loved one who had died. Many readers called me on it, and I know better now." The person is well aware of the date, and will be grateful that others remember. When someone close to you has lost a spouse after many years of marriage, you might want to send the survivor a special note on the couple's wedding anniversary.

## Format

- For business, sales-oriented, or official letters, send typed or handwritten messages on letterhead or personal-business stationery.

- Commercial greeting cards are appropriate for non-business uses, as long as you add a handwritten note.

- E-mailed birthday and anniversary wishes are also received happily.

- Many newspapers have columns where family and friends can publish birthday or anniversary congratulations (usually for a fee). Often this is done in conjunction with an open house or reception to celebrate the anniversary.

## WORDS

celebration	heartfelt	milestone	remember
congratulations	honored	progress	special
delighted	landmark	prosperity	successful
future	memorable	red-letter day	unique
happy	memories	remarkable	

## PHRASES

all good wishes	important day
anticipate another period of success	look forward to the next ten years
celebrate with you	on the occasion of
convey our warmest good wishes	send our love
great pleasure to wish you	

## SENTENCES

Congratulations on forty years of outstanding contributions to Heaslop-Moore Plastics.

Congratulations on the tenth anniversary of Stanley Graff Real Estate—it has been a pleasure serving all your stationery needs!

Every good wish to both of you for much health, happiness, prosperity, and many more years of togetherness.

Here's a question for you from Ruth Gordon: "How old would you be if you didn't know how old you were?"

May you enjoy many more anniversaries—each happier than the last.

May you live as long as you want, and never want as long as you live!  
(traditional birthday wish)

May you live long and prosper!

On the occasion of your 25th wedding anniversary, we send you our best wishes for continued love and happiness together.

Today marks the fifth anniversary of Archie's death, and I wanted you to know that we still miss him and that you are in our thoughts today.

## PARAGRAPHS

Best wishes for a happy anniversary to a couple we have long admired and loved. May your relationship continue to be a blessing to both of you as well as to all those who know you.

This marks the tenth anniversary of our productive and happy business association. In that time, we have come to appreciate Fausto Babel Inc.'s prompt service, reliable products, and knowledgeable staff. I'm sure the next ten years will be equally happy and productive. Congratulations to all of you.

Happy 1st Anniversary! I have such lovely memories of your wedding day. I hope you have been gathering more happy memories of your first year of married life.

Barbara and Dick Siddal celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on February 14. They have four children, nine grandchildren, and many wonderful friends. Love and congratulations from the whole family.

Sunday is the first anniversary of Emily's death, and I couldn't let the day go by without writing to see how you are getting along and to tell you that all Emily's friends here in Groves Corners miss her very much.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Muriel Joy,

Happy birthday! I'm sending you 6 quarters, 6 colored bows for your hair, 6 teddy-bear stickers, and 6 tiny horses for your collection.

How old did you say you are today?

Love,

Aunt Dinah

Dear Dr. Arnold,

On behalf of the governing board, I would like to congratulate you on ten years of outstanding service as headmaster. Under your leadership the School has established itself among the premier ranks of such institutions.

Be assured of our continued admiration and support.

Very sincerely yours,

Dear Winnie and Ed,

Congratulations to you both on the fifteenth anniversary of Leitner's Heating & Plumbing. As you know by now, you're our best (our only!) supplier, and the reason is simple: you're a class act. Quality and competence have paid off for you, and nobody could be happier for you than I. Best wishes with the next fifteen years.

Dear Auntie Em,

I send you love and hugs on your 80th birthday. If only I were there to celebrate with you!

I read this once: "Years in themselves mean nothing. How we live them means everything." (Elisabeth Marbury) I hope I live my years as well as you've lived yours!

Speaking of which, how is the bridge group? the golf foursome? the church cleaning crew? your birthday luncheon friends? your bowling game? your Monday night dinners with the family? And are you still going to Las Vegas in February?

(Watch the mail for a small package from me!)

Love, D.

Dear Rabbi Wassermann,

On behalf of the members and officers of the Adath Women's League, I send you best wishes for a joyous birthday and a happy, healthy year!

Karen Engelschall

President

Adath Women's League

Dear Martin,

All of us here at Eden Land Corporation congratulate you at Chuzzlewit Ltd. on your twenty years of solid contributions in the field of architecture.

We know that when we do business with you we can count on superior designs, reasonable costs, and dependable delivery dates.

May the success of these first twenty years lead to an even more successful second twenty.

With best wishes,

Dear Penrod,

Congratulations on your twelfth birthday. I hope you have a wonderful time and get everything you want (although, from what your father tells me, I hope you don't want another slingshot).

Your uncle and I are sorry we can't be there to celebrate with you, but I'm sending you a little something in a separate package. Have a good time and give everyone a hug for us.

Happy birthday!

Dear Grandma Annie,

I know you and Grandpa Oliver would have been married 65 years today—and that you still miss him. I love my photograph of the two of



you taken at your 60th wedding anniversary party. I think about him—and about you—a lot.

I hope this day isn't too sad for you. Fortunately you have a lot of happy memories—maybe they'll be some comfort.

Just thinking about you...

Love from Monica

See also: ANNOUNCEMENTS, BELATED, CONGRATULATIONS, FAMILY, GOODWILL, INVITATIONS, THANK YOU.

# Announcements

*It is good news, worthy of all acceptance! and yet not too good to be true.*

—MATTHEW HENRY

Announcements, whether formal or informal, make an art of stating essential facts in the fewest possible words. A little like this paragraph.

## Announcements Are Made for

- acquisition
- address change
- anniversary: business/wedding (see ANNIVERSARIES)
- baby birth or adoption
- change in benefits (reduced/increased/additional), policies (purchasing/hiring), regulations, procedures (billing dates)
- collection actions on overdue account (see COLLECTION)
- company merger/reorganization
- death
- divorce
- engagement (see WEDDINGS)
- graduation
- layoff (see EMPLOYMENT)
- marital separation
- meeting/workshop/conference
- merger or acquisition
- new company policy/directions/administration/management
- new division/subsidiary
- new home/house/apartment/condo
- new office/business/professional practice/service/career
- new partner/executive/associate/employee
- open house: school/business
- price/rent increase/reduction
- product recall
- promotion
- resignation/retirement (see also EMPLOYMENT)
- wedding (see WEDDINGS)

## How to Say It

- Express pleasure in making the announcement.
- List key details of the news or event: who, what, when, where, why.
- To announce a meeting, include: the name of the organization, subcommittee, or group; the date, time, place, and purpose of the meeting; a request to notify a contact person if unable to attend. This can be done by preprinted postcard or by in-house memo or e-mail. To announce a directors' meeting, follow the format fixed by corporate by-laws or by state or federal laws; a waiver of notice or a proxy card is often enclosed along with a postage-paid reply envelope.
- To announce the opening of a new business or store, use an invitation format to ask customers to an open house or special sales event.
- To announce changes in company policies, benefits, procedures, or regulations, include: an expression of pleasure in announcing the change; a description of the change; a reference to the former policy, if necessary for clarification; an explanation of what the change will mean for employees or customers; printed instructions or guidelines if appropriate; the reason for the change and why it is an improvement; the deadline for implementing the change; the name and telephone number of a contact person for questions; an expression of your enthusiasm about the change; appreciation for help in effecting the change.
- To announce a birth or adoption, use engraved, printed, hand-lettered, commercial, or designed-by-you notes. Include: the baby's full name and, if not obvious from the name or if still unnamed, whether it's a boy or girl; birthdate (and time, if you wish) or age (if the baby is adopted); parents' full names; siblings' names (optional); some expression of happiness ("pleased to announce"). Baby announcements are made by unmarried parents ("Julia Norman and Basil Fane announce the birth of their son, Alec Norman-Fane"), by single parents ("Jean Emerson announces the birth of her son, Howard Thede Emerson"), and by married couples where each uses a separate name. Newspaper birth announcements include: the date of birth; sex of child and name, if known; parents' names and hometowns; grandparents' names. Some newspapers allow weight and height information and such sentiments as "welcome with love" or the mention of "many aunts, uncles, and cousins" in listing the baby's relatives. Check with your newspaper about its guidelines.
- To announce a change of address, use forms available from the United States Postal Service, commercial change of address notes, or printed cards: "As of July 1, Sybil Knox (formerly Sybil Coates or Mrs. Adrian Coates) will be living at 15 Morland Drive, Houston, TX 77005, 713/555-1234."

- To announce a graduation, use the printed announcements available through most high schools and colleges. Since space at graduation ceremonies is often limited, announcements are more common than invitations. There is no obligation to send a gift in response to an announcement (a congratulatory card is usually sent), but since many people feel so obligated, it is kinder to send announcements only to those close to the graduate.
- To announce a separation or divorce to family and friends (which is a personal decision), state the news briefly (“We regret to inform you that our divorce was finalized on December 1”) or frame the news as a change of address, telling where each person and the children will live after a certain date. If the woman resumes her birth name, identify her that way. You are not obliged to explain what has happened; if people sense from your announcement that you are retaining some privacy, it will be easier to cope the next time you see them. Notify banks, businesses, charge accounts, and creditors of the changed circumstances.
- Deaths are announced in several ways: (1) a death notice is inserted (usually for a fee) in the obituary section of the newspaper; (2) a news article describes the person’s achievements and contributions; (3) printed announcements are sent to out-of-town friends and acquaintances; (4) handwritten notes are sent to close family and friends who live out of town. The deceased person’s address book will indicate who should be notified. The newspaper obituary notice includes: name of deceased, including a woman’s birth name if she wasn’t already using it; address; date of death; age at time of death; names, relationships, and hometowns of survivors; affiliations; personal or career information; date and place of services and interment; whether services are private or open to friends and relatives; suggestions for flowers or memorial contributions; name, address, and telephone number of funeral home. Since the death announcement appears in the paper almost immediately, hand-deliver it or read it over the phone.

### What Not to Say

- Don’t include unrelated information or news. Although there are some exceptions (changes in company policy, for example), an announcement is not meant for lengthy explanations, instructions, or descriptions. An announcement can become diluted when part of a longer communication.

### Tips on Writing

- Send your announcement as soon as possible after the event. “The

first rule of thumb about announcing an event...is that *your* announcement reaches the reader before the news travels by other means. If your announcement is old news, it has arrived too late." (Dianne Booher)

- Ask someone to double-check your spelling and the general content. The announcement with errors in it is announcing something very different from what was intended.

## Special Situations

- Combine routine announcements (new type of billing statement, new address, or meeting notice) with goodwill or sales messages.
- A news release announces information of interest to the general public (product recall; annual or quarterly financial report; business anniversary; fundraiser; new programs, policies, executives; company achievements, mergers, or acquisitions). Sent to newspaper editors and to radio and television station news directors, the news release includes, along with the announcement, your organization's name and address and the name and telephone number of a contact person. Address the news release to a specific person; call and ask for a name if you don't have one. Double or triple space, leaving wide margins, and answer the who-what-when-where-why-how questions in the first paragraph or two. Double-check accuracy of your facts and explain any unfamiliar terms. News releases traditionally have "more" typed at the bottom of each page except the last, which has "-30-" or "###" to indicate the end.

## Format

- Business announcements are made in traditional letter format typed on letterhead stationery. When sent to large numbers of people, form letters are used.
- Use a memo format for interoffice announcements (new benefits package, change in flex-hours procedures). Sometimes e-mail is a good choice.
- Formal announcements are printed or engraved in black ink on a white or cream-colored card (with matching envelopes). Stationery stores and printers have sample announcements ranging from traditional to modern in a variety of fonts, papers, inks, and formats.
- Announcements made to close friends and family are handwritten on foldovers or personal stationery.
- Postcards are appropriate for announcing changes of address, meetings, and special sales.

## WORDS

announce	inform	reveal
celebrate	introduce	share
delighted	mention	signal
gratified	notice	
happy	pleased	
honor	report	

## PHRASES

announces the appointment of	joyfully announce the birth/
are pleased/proud/ happy to announce	adoption/arrival of
give notice that	make known/public
happily announce the merger of/a	notice is hereby given that
new subsidiary	public announcement
have the honor of announcing	take pleasure in announcing
it is with great pleasure that we announce	wish to announce/inform/ advise you

## SENTENCES

A meeting of the Broadway-Aldine Community Council will be held October 3 at 7:00 p.m. in the NewBank boardroom to elect board members and officers for the coming year.

Ben Bowser announces that by permission of the court of Ramsey County, New Jersey, April 18, 2002, he will now be known as Benjamin Middleton.

Broadbent Civil Engineering, Inc., is proud to announce the opening of offices in Denver and Salt Lake City.

Dolores Haze (formerly Mrs. Richard F. Schiller) has changed her address to 155 Carol Avenue, Gilberts, IL 60136.

Important notice of change in terms: Effective January 1, 2004, your credit card agreement will be amended as follows.

Isabel Wahrfield and Frank Goodwin announce the dissolution of their marriage, effective July 15.

Mrs. Rachel Dean announces the engagement of her daughter Susan to Richard Tebben.

Nguyen Van Truy and Tran Huong Lang are proud and happy to announce the birth of their son Nguyen Van Tuan on March 11, 2002.

Please be advised that your payment due date has been changed to the sixteenth day of each month.

Vanderhof Industries, Inc. is pleased to announce the acquisition of the Connelly-Smith-Dulcy Energy Group, a Gordon-area company with ninety-seven employees that specializes in energy development services.

With great sadness we announce the death of our husband and father, Leon Gonzalez.

## PARAGRAPHS

Fairford Corporation, Cooper City, announces that it has reached a distributorship agreement with Antoine-Lettice, based in Paris, France, granting them exclusive marketing rights for its Superbe! ultra-high-pressure waterjet equipment in France and Italy, with nonexclusive rights for the rest of Europe.

Averill Airlines will now serve Paris's Charles de Gaulle Airport (previously Orly). Airport transfers included in any of our vacation packages will provide convenient motorcoach transportation between Charles de Gaulle Airport and Port Maillot Station in Paris (formerly Montparnasse Station).

Miles and I have decided that we would make better friends than spouses. As of last week, we have canceled our engagement. We are both, I think, quite relieved, although we still think the world of each other. I know how happy you were for me when I wrote about our engagement, so I wanted to let you know right away that you can still be happy for me—but not because I'm engaged.

Carrie and Frederick Josser, New London, celebrated their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary on March 2. An open house was hosted by Cynthia and Ted Josser of Collins. Eight proud children and many friends and relatives were there.

I'm sorry to tell you that Mother died on July 11 of a heart attack. I know how much your friendship and your lively letters meant to her over the years. She spoke of you often.

We regret to announce that our Davy Jones Aquarium Pump, Model no. 686, has been found to be defective. It is possible that it could deliver a fatal shock. Please return your pump as soon as possible to the store where you purchased it or call the toll-free number below for instructions.

Eggerson Power Equipment Company is proud to announce the opening of a new store on County Road B and Highway 47. One of the largest power equipment sources in the state, the new store specializes

in an exhaustive in-store stock and a forty-eight-hour “we can get it” guarantee.

Cornelia (Kay) Motford, George and Gladys are now living at 1941 Knowles Avenue, Centralia, KY 42330 (502/555-4590). Henry Moulton Pulham is living at 332 Riverside Drive, Lexington, KY 40507 (606/555-2441).

Montford Estates is pleased to announce the expansion of its commercial construction division. The division offers cost-efficient, high-quality commercial construction with emphasis on interior detailing.

Georgina Gardner has been promoted to director of retail leasing for Pelham Development Properties. She will be responsible for leasing Pelham Mall in downtown Brandon.

Due to the rapid rise in labor and operating costs, Ames Fast Maintenance finds it necessary to increase service charges as of September 1. Service charge increases will vary, depending upon the type of service your company uses: on call, when needed, monthly preventive maintenance.

The Board of Directors of the Fiske Corporation will meet on Wednesday, December 3, at 10:00 a.m. at the Company’s central office in Harrington. New contracts for executives will be discussed, and such other business as may come before the meeting will be acted upon. If you cannot attend, please sign the enclosed waiver of notice.

Thanks to you, and the orders that have been pouring in for our special line of children’s clothing, we are able to make greater bulk purchases of raw materials and thus manufacture at a lower cost. We are proud to announce that we are passing on these savings to you. Enclosed is our current catalog, but please note the new low prices printed in red.

Francis Getliffe, age 44, of Cambridge. Survived by wife, Katherine March Getliffe; son, Francis, Jr.; brother Herbert; also nieces and nephews and good friends from C.P. Snow, Inc. Special thanks to the staff at Cambridge Lutheran Hospital. Memorial service Sunday at 2:00 p.m. at the Hillside Memorial Funeral Home. Family will receive friends one hour prior to service. Interment Hillside, with reception following in the Hillside Community Room. Memorials preferred. Hillside Memorium, 555-1216.

## **SAMPLE LETTERS**

Dear Friend,

We have moved! During the past fifteen years we were so crowded in our old location that sometimes customers had to stand shoulder to shoulder or squeeze through the aisles. Nowadays you’ll find it much easier to call on Taylor & Company.

Easy parking facilities in our parking lot and pleasant offices will make it simple for you to meet all your printing needs.



Enclosed is a map showing the new location, along with a one-time 10% discount coupon. Come in and see us while the paint's still fresh!

Sincerely yours,

Brangwen International  
is pleased to announce  
that Lydia Lensky  
has joined the firm  
as a partner.  
She will direct the  
Southeast Asia Operations.

FOR: Immediate Release

Boorman, Inc. of Menzies announces the recall of its fresh and frozen sandwiches because of the discovery of bacterial contamination during a recent Food and Drug Administration (FDA) test. Some of the sandwiches were found to contain *Listeria monocytogenes*, a bacterium that can endanger fetuses, infants, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems.

No illnesses have been reported.

Please destroy all Boorman QuickWich sandwiches from lot 480032 or return them to Boorman for a refund.

Paul J. Maggio, D.D.S.  
and Matthew J. Maggio, D.D.S.  
announce the opening  
of their new office  
at 1099 Kenyon Road  
Fort Dodge, Iowa 50501  
(515/576-1981)  
and an open house  
on July 15, 2004

Dear Bondholder:

This letter is to inform you that a portion of the July 1, 2003, debt service payment for the above-referenced bond issue was made with monies

transferred from the Reserve Fund established pursuant to Section 4.09 of the Indenture of Trust dated December 1, 1997, between Simmons International and Herbert Banking & Trust, as Trustee. Use of such monies in the Reserve Fund does *not* constitute an Event of Default under the indenture. However, the Trustee considers this information may be of interest to bondholders and potential bondholders.

Sincerely,

Bonnie and Steven Goldsmith  
are most happy to announce  
the arrival of their daughter

Emily Virginia

born in Korea May 23, 1989

welcomed home October 11, 1989

Dear Customer:

As of May 1 of this year, your garbage hauling fee will be increased by \$1.95 per month. We are always reluctant to raise prices, but are obliged to do so in this case by a recent ruling of the Silvius County Board of Commissioners.

In order to conserve landfill space, all garbage collected in Silvius County since July of 1989 has been required to be taken to the new recovery facility in Shepard rather than to landfills. However, it costs more to "tip" a load of garbage at Shepard than at a landfill, so the County agreed to subsidize haulers until April 30 of this year.

Although other haulers may be raising the householder's portion of the bill more than \$1.95 (due to inflation and haulers' additional operating expenses), we are going to try to keep the price increase as low as possible.

It is only fair to warn you, however, that there may be more increases in sight. The current legislature is considering raising landfill surcharges and putting a sales tax on hauling fees, which could further increase garbage bills.

There are several ways you can lower your garbage bills. Enclosed are flyers with information on using a volume-based garbage hauler, recycling, composting yard waste at home or at one of the County composting sites, and disposing properly of household hazardous waste.

For further information, call 555-1567.

Sincerely,

See also: COVER LETTERS, GOODWILL, SALES, WEDDINGS.

# Apologies

*An apology is the superglue of life. It can repair just about anything.*

—LYNN JOHNSTON

A letter is often better than a face-to-face or telephone apology because you can take your time getting the words right. It's also better to write when you don't know if the other person is willing to speak to you. A letter doesn't oblige them to respond immediately; there's time to absorb the message and decide how to react.

Whether you think of apologies as etiquette, ethics, justice, or even good business, they are an inevitable by-product of being alive. Because we all make mistakes, people are generally less bothered by your errors than you are; write your apology with dignity. "If you haven't made any mistakes lately, you must be doing something wrong." (Susan Jeffers)

## Occasions That Call for Apologies

- belated response to a gift, favor, invitation, or major event in someone's life
- billing, credit, or financial errors
- business errors: incorrect information given, order mix-ups, contract misunderstandings, merchandise that is defective, dangerous, ineffective, damaged, delayed, or that is missing parts, instructions, or warranties
- children's misbehavior or damage to property/pet
- damage to another's property
- employee problems: rudeness, ineptness, dishonesty, poor service, unsatisfactory work
- failure to keep an appointment, deadline, shipping date, payment schedule, or promise
- insulting or insensitive remarks
- personal errors: giving someone's name and phone number to a third party without permission, forgetting to include someone in an invitation, betraying a secret
- pets that bite, bark, damage property, or are otherwise nuisances
- sexual harassment
- tactless, inappropriate, rude, or drunken behavior

## How to Say It

- Briefly specify the fault and apologize for it (“I’m so sorry about the damaged book”) or, in the case of a customer complaint, summarize the problem (“I understand you were twice given incorrect information”). In most cases, use the words “I apologize” or “I am sorry.”
- Thank the person for writing or calling or for bringing the problem to your attention.
- When appropriate, convey understanding of the other person’s position: “I can see how disappointing this must have been”; “You have every right to be upset.”
- Tell what corrective action you’re taking, if appropriate (“I will replace the shovel”; “A refund check is being sent”), or offer to make amends. Suggest several possible solutions and ask which the person prefers.
- Assure the person this won’t happen again.
- In a business context, end the letter with a forward-looking comment about serving their future needs.

## What Not to Say

- Don’t apologize for more than the specific incident. Avoid generalizations about what a klutz you are or how these things always happen to you.
- Don’t be overly dramatic (“You will probably never want to see me again after what I did.” “I wish I were dead after the way I behaved last night.” “I am very, very, very sorry.” “This is the worst thing I’ve ever done in my whole life”). Apologize briefly once instead of apologizing many times in different ways.
- Don’t defend or excuse yourself, justify your actions, or sidestep an apology (“I’m sorry, but I still think I was right”). If you are going to apologize, do so cheerfully and wholeheartedly. “A stiff apology is a second insult.” (G.K. Chesterton) Ethicist Jeremy Iggers says an apology must be made unilaterally. When we begin to stray into the area of what the other person did to us, we lose the ethical base of making an apology. Whatever anyone did to us is a separate matter from whatever mistake we made.
- Don’t imply that the other person is at fault. Some people’s apologies read like accusations. In business, it is probably better not to write than to insinuate that the customer is at fault. With some ingenuity, you can express regret without accepting responsibility for a situation that is not entirely your fault. When the other person is partly responsible, apologize only for your share of it. Don’t mention anything else.
- Don’t blame the computer. By now everyone knows that some human had its fingerprints all over the guilty computer; this patently untrue

excuse only irritates people. And don't say that these things are bound to happen from time to time. Although this may be true, it makes you look careless.

- Don't admit negligence in writing. If negligence is a factor, consult with your attorney, who can suggest the best approach for your letter. In his article, "Saying You're Sorry in a Litigious Society" (in *The International Journal of Medicine and Law*, no. 7/8, 1992), Ralph Slovenko advises doctors to be careful about how they sympathize on a patient's death. An expression of sympathy at a funeral, for example, "could lead to an utterance which, in the hands of a skillful lawyer, might be turned into an admission of wrongdoing."

## Tips on Writing

- Write as soon as possible. Procrastination turns writing an apology into a major effort and you end up apologizing twice, once for the infraction and once for the delay.
- Sometimes there are mitigating circumstances—for example, a shipment delayed because of a strike or flu outbreak. At other times, however, explanations weaken your apology—when, for example, you try to explain why you were rude or why a child said something tactless but truthful.

## Special Situations

- Parents of a child who annoys or hurts others or damages property write a note of apology. However, the child should also apologize in some age-appropriate manner. The adult's note might say, "Of course, Drusilla will want to apologize to you herself."
- Employees apologizing to their boss for work-related errors or behavior provide a written, detailed account of what happened because their boss most likely reports to another higher-up and will need all relevant information.
- The problem of sexual harassment has become increasingly visible and is no longer categorized as "just fooling around" or "having a good sense of humor." Making sexual remarks, threats, innuendoes, or passes is illegal. Anything that can be construed as sexual harassment requires a heartfelt apology that shows that the offender has some real (as opposed to expedient) understanding of what was done. The apology may not avert a company reprimand or even legal action, but then again it might. In any case, an apology is owed to anyone who has been sexually harassed. In addition to exhibiting contrition, the offender should promise not to repeat the behavior. Individuals being sued for sexual harassment are generally repeat offenders who

still don't understand how unacceptable their actions were. Few people will pursue a first-time offender who didn't fully realize the harm done and who is now contrite and reformed.

- The apology may have a special place in customer relations. "Two words will get you through many bad times in the business world: *I'm sorry.*" (Mary A. De Vries) A well-written apology for a business problem can make a satisfied customer out of an unsatisfied one. Sometimes you may add a refund, discount, free pass, or other material apology for your customer's inconvenience. When writing an apology to a customer, end with a positive statement: "We look forward to continuing to serve you" or "We value your patronage and your friendship."

## Format

- Use personal stationery or notecards for apologies dealing with social situations. A few greeting cards charmingly or amusingly say "I'm sorry," but you still need to add a handwritten message.

- Use business stationery for all apologies to customers, clients, and suppliers. If, however, the situation has personal overtones (a manager has publicly slighted someone or a supervisor has unjustly docked someone's pay), the apology might be handwritten on business-personal stationery.

- Routine apologies (shipping delays, out-of-stock merchandise) are handled with a form letter.

- An e-mailed apology would probably not be the most persuasive, unless you needed to get the apology to the other person immediately and the telephone wasn't an option.

## WORDS

a b s e n t -  
mindedly

accidental

acknowledge

admit

awkward

blunder

careless

compensate

ill-advised

imperfect

imprudent

inaccurate

inadequate

inadvertent

incomplete

inconsiderate

misleading

misprint

misquote

mistaken

misunderstand-  
ing

muddle

negligence

omitted

repay

responsible

restitution

restore

sheepish

short-sighted

slip

tactless

distressed	inconvenience	overlooked	thoughtless
disturbed	(	pardon	unaware
embarrassed	incorrect	rectify	unfortunate
erroneous	insufficient	red-faced	unhappy
error	irresponsible	redo	unintentional
excuse	lax	regrettable	unsatisfactory
explain	miscalculation	reimburse	unsound
failure	misconception	remiss	unwarranted
fault	misconstrued	repair	unwise
	misinterpreted		

## PHRASES

absolutely no excuse for	avoid this in the future
accept the blame for	breach of good manners
admit that I was wrong	correct the situation
angry with myself	express my regret
appreciate your calling our attention to	feel sorry/terrible/bad about
asleep at the wheel/on the job/	how can I apologize for
at the switch	I am most upset about
I am not excusing our/my errors, but	presumed where I shouldn't have
I am so sorry for presumed	reproach myself
I don't know how it happened that	prevent a recurrence
I have thoroughly investigated/	put to rights
looked into the matter and	sincerely regret/apologize
I'm sorry you were dissatisfied with	sorely regret
it was embarrassing to discover that	sorry for the inconvenience/confusion/
it was most understanding of you to	mix-up/misunderstanding
I was distressed to hear/read/	the least I can do is
discover/learn that	to compensate for
make amends/restitution	under the mistaken impression that
make right with you	

much to my regret	until you are completely satisfied
my apologies for any inconvenience	weighs on my mind
owe you an apology for	we regret to inform our customers
please accept my/our apology/	that
apologies for	you were entirely right about

## SENTENCES

driveway, I want you to know how sorry we are and to assure you that it won't happen again.

As you rightly pointed out, a mistake has been made on your July bill.

I am extremely embarrassed about my behavior last night.

I am sincerely/very sorry.

I apologize for Jimmy's behavior.

I can only hope you will forgive this serious lapse of good taste on my part.

I don't blame you for being upset.

I don't like being on the outs with you, particularly since it was my fault.

I hope this situation can be mended to everyone's satisfaction.

I'm sorry for telling everyone in the office your good news before you could tell them—I don't know what I was thinking.

I'm sorry you were treated so disparagingly by the salesclerk.

I only realized later how insulting my remarks might have appeared.

I understand how disappointed you must have been to receive only half your order.

I've taken steps to ensure that it doesn't happen again.

I was totally out of line this morning when I insisted on knowing what your salary is—I can only hope you will forgive my poor taste and insensitivity.

My face gets red every time I remember that night.

Please accept my apology for the oversight.

Please excuse my inattention/shortsightedness/thoughtlessness.

Please forgive me.

Thank you for advising us of this error/for bringing the matter to my attention.

Thank you for your letter of July 15 telling us about the unfortunate remark made by one of the security guards.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

This will not, of course, happen again.



We apologize for the delay—it is unfortunately unavoidable.  
 We are sorry/apologize for any embarrassment this has caused you.  
 We look forward to continuing to serve you.  
 We owe you an apology.  
 We were caught napping on this one.  
 You were right, I was wrong, and I'm sorry.

## PARAGRAPHS

We are unable to deliver the spring fabric samples by the date promised. The product supervisor promises me that you will have them by January 5. If this is unsatisfactory, please telephone me. It isn't often we have to renege on a delivery date, and we're not happy about it. Please accept our apologies for the delay.

Please accept our apologies for what's recently happened at your house. We're all working hard to find other homes for the bunnies. When Hillel assured you that both bunnies were female, he relied on the green-striped ribbons they wore around their necks. None of us knew that a four-year-old neighbor had switched a green-striped ribbon for a yellow polka-dotted ribbon that the male rabbits were wearing. I know this doesn't make up to you for what you've been through, but I thought you should know that our intentions were good. Again, we're sorry and we'll let you know as soon as we've found ten good homes.

We were sorry to hear that the track lighting fixture you ordered was defective, as described in your letter of April 29. Please return it to us using its original mailing box and the enclosed label, and we will send you a replacement by return mail. All Midlothian merchandise is inspected twice before leaving the factory, but with a recent 45% increase in production, we have a few rough spots to work out yet. I'm sorry that you were inconvenienced, and hope that you will continue to use our fine Midlothian products—products that we proudly back with our full-service Midlothian guarantee.

It occurred to me in a dream, or maybe it was in the shower, that you had asked for the return of your baby books some time ago. I suppose the friend's child has gone off to college by now. I'm sorry for the tardiness—they're in today's mail.

We erroneously mailed you the same order you placed last month. This month's order has been sent this morning, and we've marked the box plainly with AUGUST written in large red letters. If you will please refuse acceptance of the first box, the carrier will bring it back to us. We apologize for the error.

We were sorry to hear that the last neon tetras you bought from us were infected with ich and subsequently infected your entire aquarium. As tropical fish enthusiasts ourselves, we appreciate how devastating

this has been. I immediately spoke to our supplier about the problem, and she has assured me this was an isolated slip-up. In the meantime, please restock your aquarium at our expense. Thank you for your understanding. I hope you will continue to be one of our most valued customers.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Dorothea,

I feel dreadful about ruining your lovely luncheon yesterday by arguing with Celia about Will Ladislav. You certainly did everything you could to save the situation, and I apologize most humbly for ignoring good taste, old friendship, and common sense in pursuing a “discussion” that was completely inappropriate.

I talked to Celia first thing this morning and attempted to mend my fences there, but I feel a great deal worse about what I did to you. The luncheon was delicious, and the first two hours were delightful. I hope you will someday be able to forgive me for blighting the last half-hour.

Your friend,

Dear Mr. Ravenal:

As editor of the Cotton Blossom newsletter, I want to apologize for omitting your name in the last issue. Captain Hawks asked me how I could have possibly forgotten to include our hottest new actor! In proofreading the copy, my eyes failed to notice that your name wasn't where my brain expected it to be. I'm sorry. A correction will appear in the next issue.

Regretfully,

Dear Hsiao-Wei,

I apologize for not showing up at the meeting this afternoon. Although there is no excuse for such a thing, I will say that I was involved in an automobile accident on the way to work and what with filling out forms, notifying my insurance company, and arranging for a rental car, I completely forget about the meeting.

Can we reschedule for this Thursday, same time? Thanks—and again, I'm sorry.

Regards,

Dear Merton Denscher,

Thank you for your letter of March 19. I am sorry that the background research I submitted was unusable. A careful re-reading of your instructions showed me at once where I'd gone wrong. I do apologize.

With your permission, I would like to resubmit the work—this time correctly. I believe I can get it to you by the end of next week since I am already familiar with the relevant sources for your topic.

Please let me know at once if you prefer me not to go ahead.

Sincerely,

Dear Annette,

I must beg your forgiveness for my outspoken and insensitive remarks last night about your religious convictions. I'm afraid I got carried away in the heat of the discussion. I certainly feel that each of us has a right to our own beliefs, and I in no way meant to belittle yours.

I would be happy if you would accept an invitation to dinner at my house on Saturday, August 3, at 7:00 p.m. I'm just having a few friends, most of whom you know.

Hoping to see you then, I am

Yours truly,

See also: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, ADJUSTMENTS, BELATED, COMPLAINTS, RESPONSES, SENSITIVE.

# Letters of Application

*The nearest to perfection most people ever come is when filling out an employment application.*

—KEN KRAFT

There are three ways to persuade a prospective employer to invite you for an interview:

1. Fill in one of the company's application forms and submit it alone or with a cover letter (a brief letter stating that the application is enclosed and mentioning a point or two indicating you are a good candidate for the job).
2. Send a résumé (a businesslike and detailed summary of your work and educational history, your skills, and your career goals), also accompanied by a cover letter.
3. Write a letter of application, which is a combination cover letter and résumé—longer than a cover letter, shorter and less formal than a résumé. (The letter of application is also known as a broadcast letter or a letter of interest.)

Which approach is best? The clue comes from the prospective employer: "Fill out an application form"; "Send or fax a résumé"; "Apply to the following department."

In addition to applications that are solicited (there is a definite opening being advertised), there are unsolicited applications (you know of no opening but you would like to work for that company). In the latter case, with no directions from the employer as to how to apply, a letter of application—a powerful one-page letter that includes résumé material—may be more effective than a conventional résumé and cover letter.

Some organizations continue to rely on letters of application to gauge an applicant's overall self-presentation and command of the written language.

The purpose of the application letter is to attract and hold the reader's attention long enough to get your letter placed in the short pile of those candidates who will receive an invitation to an interview. (The other pile is much, much taller.) A letter of application is thus a sales letter in which you are both seller and product.

## Send an Application Letter to

- camps
- clubs and organizations
- colleges, universities, technical schools
- franchise companies
- internships
- private elementary and secondary schools
- prospective employers
- volunteer organizations

### How to Say It

- Address your letter to a specific individual, after verifying the person's title and double-checking the spelling of the name (even if it's simple—"Gene" could be "Jeanne," "John" could be "Jon").
- Open with an attention-getting sentence or paragraph.
- Tell why you are seeking this position, why you have chosen to apply to this particular company, and why you believe you are qualified.
- List the skills, education, and experience that are most relevant to the opening. Leave the rest for the interview.
- Request an interview ("I will be in Burbank next week and would like to arrange an interview").
- Provide an address, daytime phone number, fax number, and e-mail address.
- Close with a pleasant or forward-looking statement: "I appreciate your time and consideration"; "I look forward to discussing this position with you."

### What Not to Say

- Don't indulge in generalities or the vague "etc."; specify exactly what you can do or have done.
- Don't use gimmicks, fancy language that you don't normally use, a "humorous" approach, or any attention-getting device that could backfire. Conservative (which is not the same as boring) is better here.
- Don't refer to yourself as "the writer" ("The writer has had six years' experience as a heavy equipment operator").
- Don't emphasize how much the company can do to further your career goals. Emphasize rather how your abilities can benefit the company. Instead of the message "Here is what I can do," fashion the message to say, "Here is what I can do for you."
- Don't mention negative aspects of your present or past employment.
- Don't belittle your qualifications.

- Don't base your request on your need for the job or on an appeal to sympathy ("I am the only support of my family"); focus on what you have to offer.
- Don't mention salary in your letter (even when an ad asks you to state salary requirements); save that discussion for the interview.

## Tips on Writing

- Don't use your present company's letterhead stationery for your letter of application.
- Re-read your letter before mailing to see if it sounds confident, professional, and persuasive. If you were the employer, would you want to interview the person who wrote this?
- Be concise. The letter of application should be no longer than one page.
- Use action verbs when describing your abilities and accomplishments (see RÉSUMÉS for a list of effective verbs).
- Tailor your message to a specific company. Employers can spot a generic or boilerplate letter; it tells them you are more interested in a job, any job, than in a job with them. Personalize your letter. When prospective employers receive a letter that has been written especially for them, they will give it more than the sixty seconds most letters get.
- The most critical factor in getting an interview is how closely you match the prospective employer's needs. You already know what you have to offer; you also have to know what the company needs from you. Call the company and ask questions; research the company at the library; speak to people who work there or who know the company. By presenting as clear a picture of yourself as you can, couched in terms of what the company needs, you make it easy for an employer to determine quickly whether there is a match.
- It's not necessary to say "References available upon request." It is understood by both parties that references will be offered and checked.
- Avoid spelling or grammar errors, low-quality paper, smudged or hard-to-read print, and poor spacing on the page. In the case of a fax, use the "fine resolution" setting to send as sharp a copy as possible.

## Special Situations

- To apply for a franchise, study FTC guidelines. You may want a lawyer to help you with some of the correspondence.
- Most applications to colleges, universities, community colleges, or technical schools are routine and codified. If, however, you are a student at the very high or very low end of your graduating class or

if you have special needs (for financial assistance, for example), seek help from your high school counseling office, private counseling services, or some of the numerous publications available. For some students, the process of applying for admission to college can take many months and require specialized information.

- If you are on the other side of the desk and are asked to design a job application form, familiarize yourself with state and federal anti-discrimination laws. You may not ask applicants for such information as age, race, sex, height and weight, color of eyes, hair, or complexion; birthplace; dates of public school attendance; arrest record, type of military discharge, past workers' compensation claims; whether they own their own home, have ever been sued, or had a surety bond or government clearance denied; work transportation arrangements; non-job-related handicaps; activities, memberships, and hobbies not directly related to the job; how they heard about the job opening. Have a lawyer check the rough draft of your application form to ensure that it complies with state and federal laws.

## Format

- Letters of application are typed, preferably on letterhead stationery.
- Some prospective employers suggest that applicants fax materials to them. Unless a résumé is specifically requested, you may fax a letter of application, either with a cover sheet or leaving space at the top of the letter for the faxing information (see FAXES).

## WORDS

abilities	education	opportunity	skills
apply	experience	professional	suitable
background	goals	qualified	
credentials	objectives	responsible	

## PHRASES

applying for the position of	may I have fifteen minutes of your
arrange a meeting at your convenience	time to discuss
experience that qualifies me for	meet and exceed your criteria
	serious interest in

extensive experience with	similar to my most recent position
good candidate/ match for the job	skills that would be useful to
in response to your advertisement	ten years' experience with
interested in pursuing a career with	well suited for

## SENTENCES

According to this morning's paper, you are seeking a storm restoration contractor.

After eight years as a senior analog engineer at Blayds-Conway, I am seeking a position in this area because of a family move.

At the suggestion of Wilhelmina Douglas-Stewart, I am writing to request an interview for the project leader position in your long haul fiber optic communications department.

Because I believe you would find me to be an efficient, experienced, and dedicated legal administrative assistant, I am applying for the position at Wilson & Bean.

Dr. Breuer has informed me that you are currently looking for a part-time veterinary technician.

I am applying for the position of credit research analyst that you advertised in today's paper.

I look forward to hearing from you.

I understand from Dr. Demetrius Doboobie that you have an opening for a medical records supervisor.

I understand that there is currently no opening in your office, but I would like you to keep my résumé on file and to consider me for any openings that occur.

I was happy to learn that there is an opening for an insurance underwriting coordinator at the Daffyd Evans Marine Insurance Agency.

I was pleased to see your advertisement in this morning's paper for a floral designer because I have just moved here and am looking for a position after having worked as a floral designer in Chicago for the past six years.

I will call you Thursday to discuss setting up an interview.

My eight years as a food microbiologist at Samuel Braceweight, Inc., make me eminently suitable for the responsibilities of the position you are currently advertising.



Please consider me as an applicant for your advertised part-time position as clerical assistant in your business office.

Roger Brevard told me that you are looking for a real-time software engineer.

Thank you for considering my application.

The skills and duties outlined in your advertisement in today's paper are almost a perfect match for the position I held until recently at Geoffrey Bentley Publishers, Inc.

## PARAGRAPHS

I have held a position as head teller very similar to the one you are currently advertising. Employed for the past five years at Jethway State Bank, I was promoted to head teller last January. Because of a family situation, I am obliged to move to Swancourt. My immediate supervisor, Felix Jethway, said he would be happy to discuss my work with you if you would like to telephone him (515/555-1000).

As you know, I have been managing the Albany branch of your Woodstock Bookstore for three years. I understand that you plan to franchise several of your bookstores, and I would like to apply for the franchise for this store, if it is available.

Your neighbor, Gina Gregers, who is a friend of mine from high school, told me yesterday that you are seeking a lunch-hour delivery driver for your catering company. I have a valid driver's license, have never had a moving violation, and, as a twenty-year resident of Werle Heights, know my way around the city and suburbs.

My career accomplishments include: setting a fifteen-year collection record during the first two months of employment as a collector of delinquent medical accounts; being promoted to unit manager as a result of high achievement levels and later to office collection manager; maintaining my record as the leading collector at the Denver branch of the Montjoy Agencies.

I would like to be considered for your customer service representative position. You requested experience in the transportation industry; I was employed from 1998—2001 as customer service representative for Coldstream Transport and from 1995-1998 as dispatcher for Steenson Intermountain

Express.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Ms. Rondabale,

I would like to apply for the position of surgery scheduler for your ophthalmology practice.

I received a two-year degree in office administration from Beckford Business College in 2000. Since then, I have worked full-time for Alasi Surgical Associates as a surgery scheduler.

The work here has been more than satisfactory to me, but your clinic is half an hour closer to my home and I would like to shorten the commute.

I can come for an interview any Saturday, or any weekday during the lunch hour, or after 5:30. If you leave an interview date and time on my home answering machine (555-1234), I will call to confirm.

Thank you.

Dear Ms. Saverne,

As the result of a telephone call to your office this morning, I learned that Duval International is seeking someone to manage the security operations of its office complex, and that you are the person to contact about the position.

I have eleven years' experience as a security services supervisor and broad experience with access control and with most security systems, including CCTV alarms. I also have an AA degree in law enforcement.

I was employed by Stanislas & Sons from 1989-1994, and by Barr Associates from 1994 to the present. Favorable references are available from both companies.

I would like to set up an interview to discuss the position with you. I have 24-hour voice mail at 555-1234.

Dear Ms. Jocelyn,

I am looking for a position as an electrical engineer. Several people have mentioned your employment agency as being outstanding in placing people in this field.

I have an MS in Electrical Engineering and seven years' experience in the design of lighting and power systems; the last two years I was also project manager.

I believe my qualifications make me someone you can place, both to my satisfaction and to a future employer's satisfaction.

I will call next week for an appointment and can then bring in my résumé, list of publications, and references.

I look forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

Dear Mr. Squales,

As someone with three years' telemarketing experience and two years' experience as office manager of a small business, I think I am a good candidate for your convention sales and marketing coordinator position.

My strengths include effective oral and written communication skills

and an aptitude for interpersonal business relationships. I am considered a good team player and am precise and detail-oriented in my work.

I would like to bring my résumé and references in and discuss this opening with you.

•

Dear Margaret West,

Libraries have been a second home to me for years, and I will be majoring in library science. In the meantime, I would like to apply for the summer job opening in your children's room.

Although my work background is slight (see résumé), I think I can offer you a deep and genuine interest in library science, a strong desire to excel at this kind of work, and library skills that come from many hundreds of library visits. As the oldest of five children, I also have considerable experience and a high comfort level in dealing with young people.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Dear Mr. Baillie:

The requirements for the branch manager position you advertised describe almost perfectly my own background.

As assistant manager of Gulliver Travel, I have been responsible for overseeing eight full-time agents. I am a travel school graduate (Charlson International) with a great deal of experience and a good working knowledge of the travel industry in all its phases—from issuing tickets and seat assignments and assisting with ticket assembly to PARS computer experience. I have two years of experience in domestic reservations, one year of experience working with corporate international travel operations, and a thorough understanding of international tariffs.

I would like to discuss this position with you and will be happy to come in for an interview at your convenience.

Sincerely yours,

See also: COVER LETTERS, EMPLOYMENT, FOLLOW-UP, RÉSUMÉS.

# Appointments and Interviews

*Showing up is 80% of life.*

—WOODY ALLEN

Many appointments, interviews, and meetings arranged by telephone are often confirmed by letter, fax, or e-mail.

Some appointment letters are simple: confirming or altering an appointment; reminding someone of an appointment; refusing or canceling an appointment.

When you want someone's time in order to sell your company's product or service, however, the letter requesting an appointment must be an outstanding sales letter, persuading the person that it is in their interest to see you.

To secure a job interview, send some combination of carefully crafted résumé, cover letter, or letter of application (see APPLICATIONS, RESUMES).

## Letters About Appointments Include

- accepting
- asking for/requesting
- canceling
- changing/postponing/delaying
- confirming/following up
- refusing
- thanking for

## How to Say It

- When asking for an appointment: identify yourself if you're unknown to the person; explain why you want to meet with them; mention a benefit to them in meeting with you; suggest a length of time for the appointment ("fifteen minutes" or "no more than half an hour of your time"); offer possible dates, times, and places; mention others who will be present; give your address, phone number, e-mail address, and fax number; express your appreciation for the person's

attention to your request. In some cases, tell when you will call for their response.

- When agreeing to meet with someone: say “yes” to the meeting; repeat the purpose, date, time, place, and length of meeting; express your pleasure or thanks (see also ACCEPTANCES, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS).
- When confirming arrangements made in person or by telephone: refer to your previous discussion; repeat the meeting specifics—date, time, place, purpose; close with an expression of pleasure (“look forward to discussing this”).
- When changing or postponing an appointment: mention the original time, date, and place; state your alternatives; apologize for the inconvenience; ask for confirmation of the new time.
- When refusing a request for an appointment: thank the person for their letter or telephone call; say “no” politely and neutrally; if appropriate, offer an alternative way to meet the goals of the proposed meeting; if you wish, indicate why you cannot accept, although a simple “I am unable to meet with you” should suffice.
- When canceling arrangements: repeat the time, date, place; state that you must cancel; briefly explain why; apologize for the inconvenience; offer a substitute action, if appropriate.
- When sending a follow-up letter after an appointment: give the date of the meeting; state your pleasure at all that was accomplished; enclose promised information or materials; refer to your hope for future meetings/contacts/business.

### What Not to Say

- Don’t “postpone” or “delay” a meeting that you are actually canceling. If you have no intention of ever meeting with the person, use the word “cancel” and omit all references to the future.
- Don’t over-apologize for canceling or changing an appointment unless the situation is special (you’ve requested the meeting and the company has invited upper-level management and arranged for refreshments and video equipment). Usually all you need is a brief “I’m sorry to have to cancel/change/postpone...” For more complex situations, see APOLOGIES.

### Tips on Writing

- Be assertive about making appointments; if you leave it to the other person (“I’d appreciate hearing from you”) you may not get a response.
  - Thank the person who sets up the meeting when there are more than two people getting together.

- Some people are persistent about wanting your time, from the neighbor who is determined to learn everything you know about genealogy or playing bridge to the sales representative who won't take no for an answer. When it's someone you will continue to deal with (the neighbor), write a note, using equal doses of tact and firmness: "I know you will understand, but I must say no." In the face of persistence, never give a reason for your "no." The moment you say why you are unable to meet with them ("I'm really busy just now"), they will have a response ("It will only take a minute"). When you offer another reason, they will have another rebuttal. Engaging you in wearying debate is part of the strategy; you wouldn't be the first person to say "yes" just to avoid being harangued. A simple "I'm sorry, but no" repeated many times is most effective—and putting it in writing doubles its effect.

## Special Situations

- When requesting a sales or job interview, use your letter to pique the person's curiosity. Make them want to see you. Sell your product or yourself, but don't tell so much that the person thinks nothing more will be gained by an interview.
- If you forget an interview, appointment, or meeting, write an immediate, sincere apology. Ask what you can do to make amends.

## Format

- Correspondence about business appointments, interviews, and meetings is typewritten on business letterhead or personal-business stationery.
- Interoffice and some out-of-house communications about meetings are handled by memo or e-mail.
- Letters regarding personal appointments can be either typed or handwritten. The more formal or personal the appointment is, the stronger the indication for a handwritten message.

## WORDS

accept	consult	examine	pleasure	session
arrange	contact	interview	postpone	unable
confer	discussion	notify	review	

**PHRASES**

already committed/have plans	meet with you
another engagement	move up the date to
an unexpected complication	of interest to you
can't keep our original date	previous commitments
convenient time	set a time and date
introduce you to	unfortunately obliged to
looking forward to seeing/	when you are able
meeting you	won't be free
may I suggest	would be convenient for me

**SENTENCES**

Can we change our meeting on July 15 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.?

I am unfortunately obliged to change the date we set earlier.

I don't believe a meeting would benefit either of us.

If you're unable to make the meeting on the tenth, please let my assistant know as soon as possible.

If you would like to discuss this, I could meet with you at a time convenient for you.

I'll give you a call in a couple of days to see if you can schedule a meeting with me.

I'm not able to meet with you for several months—please contact me again in late January.

I would be happy to meet with you in my office on Friday, November 8, at two o'clock to discuss your invention.

I would appreciate twenty minutes of your time this week.

I would like to meet with you to discuss Jackie's progress so far on the new medication.

I would like to review with you my current salary, which I believe no longer reflects my responsibilities and contributions.

Let me know as soon as possible if this is convenient for you.

May I stop by your office for a few minutes next week to drop off our latest samples and catalog and to explain how our new service contract works?

Mr. Patterne is seriously ill and will be unable to keep his appointment with you on June 23 at 1:30.

Thank you for your time yesterday—I enjoyed meeting with you.

This will confirm your appointment with Ms. Tucker on Tuesday, December 18, at 3:00 p.m.

We would like to discuss with you, either in person or over the telephone, our concerns about the academic progress of our daughter, May Bracknel.

## PARAGRAPHS

After you have evaluated my application and résumé, I hope we can arrange an interview at a mutually convenient time. I note several areas where the company's areas of emphasis and my areas of expertise overlap, and I would like to discuss these aspects of the position. You will no doubt have questions for me as well. I look forward to hearing from you.

Charlotte Moulin, managing director of Hardy's Cycle Supply, will be in Alberta the week of August 4, and would like to tour Wheels Unlimited while she is there. Please let me know if something can be arranged.

I understand you are looking for acreage east of town. May I come in and speak with you sometime this week about the property I have for sale?

Thank you for the copies of the contracts, which we received October 31. As we review them with our lawyer, a few questions occur to us. We would appreciate being able to sit down with you and your lawyer to discuss a few of them. When would this be possible?

Did I have the date wrong? I thought we had a meeting scheduled for 1:30 yesterday. I'm afraid I won't be free again until late next week, but maybe we can arrange something then. Please let me hear from you.

May I have fifteen minutes of your time next week to show you some large colored photographs of what Office Greenery has done for other area businesses? Offices that use our services report increased customer and employee satisfaction, and I think you will be glad you investigated our unique, effective, and cost-efficient program. I will call your secretary on Monday to see if you are available for a brief meeting.

We are interested in replacing the decorative stone brick on our home and would like you to give us an estimate on your lightweight "cultured stone." Please call either of us at work during the day or at home during the evening (see enclosed business cards) to set up an appointment. Thank you.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Mr. Stobbs:

I've received your letter of June 16 requesting an appointment to see me about your Handley Cross computer software.



We have been using the Surtees line of software for all our business needs for the past three years, and we are very satisfied with it. I don't see a meeting benefiting either of us.

Thanks anyway.

Yours truly,

Dear Lionel,

I have to cancel the meeting we set up for Friday, September 3, at 2:30 p.m., as we've got a little trouble at the Valliscourt plant. I should be back on September 6 and will call you then to set up another appointment.

Thanks for understanding.

Sincerely,

Dear Ms. Vulliamy:

People with disabilities get hired for one very special reason: they're qualified.

I would like to tell you about some of the highly qualified people listed with the Ogilvy Employment Agency who could make a positive and energetic contribution to your organization.

May I meet with you sometime next week?

Sincerely,

Dear Laura Payton:

Our longtime supplier of plastic tubing has recently informed us that they are discontinuing their plastic tubing division. Our vice-president of purchasing will be visiting several plastic tubing manufacturers in your area next week.

Would it be possible for you to schedule a meeting and plant tour for him on Tuesday or Wednesday of next week? Enclosed are data on our projected needs for plastic tubing, our production schedules, and delivery requirements that may be helpful to you in preparing for his visit.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

See also: ACCEPTANCES, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, EMPLOYMENT, FOLLOW-UP, INVITATIONS, REFUSALS, REQUESTS, THANK YOU.

# Letters of Appreciation

*I have yet to be bored by someone paying me a compliment.*

—OTTO VAN ISCH

Letters of appreciation are the easiest, most delightful letters to write. You are never obliged to write them, there is no deadline, and the only rule is sincerity. One of life's small pleasures is to be able to be kind and generous with little cost to yourself.

Letters of appreciation are related to letters of acknowledgment, congratulations, and thanks. In the latter cases, we are not surprised to hear from others, whereas a letter of appreciation is always unexpected. When Aunt Estrella gives you a gift, you thank her. When Aunt Estrella sends your son a graduation gift, he thanks her, but you write a letter of appreciation, saying how much her support of your children has meant to you over the years.

You don't need to thank someone for prompt payment, for turning in a report, for giving you a bonus based on performance, or for returning your lost wallet intact. In all these cases people are doing the expected thing. However, it is entirely appropriate to show your appreciation. As Abraham Lincoln said, "Everybody likes a compliment."

Letters of appreciation are sent to employees who do "ordinary" work, but do it well; to strangers you encounter who demonstrate above-average efficiency and service; to friends and relatives who go the extra mile for you; to people who have referred work or clients to you; perhaps to people you've read about in the newspaper who have contributed something to your community.

## Write Letters of Appreciation for

- awards/honors
- bonuses
- commendations/compliments/encouragement/praise
- community service
- complimentary letters about company/employee/service/product
- customer referrals
- customers to whom you extend privileges in appreciation of their business/ prompt payments/new accounts

- customers whose business you want to acknowledge
- employers for a bonus/raise/promotion
- employees for their good work
- financial contributions
- group efforts
- helpful advice/suggestions/tips
- introductions
- prompt payments
- public figures whose work you admire
- speeches/workshops/conferences
- sympathy (see also ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, THANK YOU)
- volunteers

### How to Say It

- State what you appreciate (a talent, the business lunch, the plans for the new building).
- Use a key word early in your note: “appreciation,” “congratulations,” “gratitude,” “admiration,” “recognition.”
- Be specific about the person’s work, talent, or actions: “You’re a delight to work with because...” or “Your work has meant a lot to the company because...” In some cases, relate an anecdote, a shared memory, or reflection that bolsters your good wishes.
- Close with wishes for continued success or with some forward-looking remark about your future business or personal association.

### What Not to Say

- Don’t add information, a meeting reminder, or a sales message; for maximum impact your upbeat message should stand alone.
- Don’t express more than you feel. People know when your sentiments are insincere. Use language that feels genuine and comfortable to you; avoid effusiveness, exaggeration, and excessive flattery.
- Don’t talk about “luck” when expressing appreciation; it implies that chance rather than talent and hard work was responsible for the person’s achievements.
- Don’t use letters of appreciation to customers as an excuse to solicit more business or for your future advantage; a meaningful letter of appreciation has only one purpose.

### Tips on Writing

- Be brief, warm, and sincere. The “brief” part is easy, but if you have trouble being warm and sincere, you might want to think about

why you're writing. Perhaps it is not a letter of appreciation that you need to send.

- Be slightly formal. Even when you know well the person to whom you're writing, a certain formality increases its impact.

- Be positive. Instead of writing, "I never thought you could do it," say "You've shown us what a person can do with enough energy and determination."

- When someone sends you a letter of appreciation, reflect on what pleases you about it. Remember this the next time you write one.

## Special Situations

- Letters of appreciation sent to customers, present and potential, are more sales letters than letters of appreciation (see SALES).

- Enormous goodwill can be generated for your business by writing brief, sincere notes of appreciation to employees, customers, or suppliers. Once you start looking for ways to appreciate people, you will see them everywhere; make a habit of sending off appreciative notes several times a month.

- Sometimes you need to turn down something—a gift, an invitation, a membership—but you are flattered and pleased at the thought behind it, so you write a letter that is part appreciation, part refusal (see also REFUSALS).

- Letters of appreciation can be written to several employees at once—teams, divisions, branch offices, sectors, and other groups that have performed particularly well or solved a problem.

- "A fan letter is an enduring testament to excellence, which puts it in a category of its own—perhaps somewhere between a valentine and an honorary degree." (Jennifer Williams) When writing a fan letter to a movie star or public figure, be brief (no more than one page). There is little point in asking for the person to call you or see you—as they say, "only in your dreams." Requesting a photograph is acceptable, although not everyone will respond. Don't send a gift; it's unlikely that the person will ever see it (it will be donated to a nonprofit organization). Addresses for most celebrities can be obtained at the library.

- If your company gives corporate gifts, attaching handwritten notes of appreciation will double their impact. Seventy-five years ago, Agnes Repplier wrote, "Letterwriting on the part of a busy man or woman is the quintessence of generosity." In today's fast-lane business culture, this generosity is even more highly regarded. Unlike the spoken compliment, this one can be read and re-read.

## Format

- Use postcards for one-or two-sentence notes of appreciation. In just minutes you can dash off notes rich in public relations potential. Consider postcards featuring scenery from your area for people outside it, art postcards, reprints from old movies that might relate to your business or your interests, or even an especially attractive picture of your factory, office, building, or other installation.
- Personal notes of appreciation are handwritten on foldovers or personal stationery.
- Business letters of appreciation are typed on letterhead stationery if you have a somewhat formal relationship with the person. In more casual contexts, jot an appreciative message on memo paper.
- E-mail, which wouldn't be appropriate for a standard thank-you note, is often useful for the quick note of appreciation. Some things seem too trivial to warrant notepaper and pen, but are just right for e-mail: "Great presentation!" (from a colleague; from a superior, a handwritten note would be preferable); "I noticed your rose garden when I drove by the other day—fabulous!"; "Heard you got another patent—way to go!"

## WORDS

admire	honor	recommend	thoughtfulness
appreciate	impressive	refreshing	thrilled
commendable	inspired	remarkable	touched
delightful	kindness	respect	treasure
engaging	knowledgeable	satisfying	triumph
enjoyable	large-hearted	sensational	unique
fascinating	memorable	sincere	valuable
favorite	one-of-a-kind	special	welcome
generous	overwhelmed	stunned	
gracious	pleased	superb	

## PHRASES

appreciate your contributions to	I want you to know how much we/I
as a token of our gratitude/appreciation	appreciate job well done

grateful to you for	offer my compliments
delighted to learn about	let me tell you how much I liked
heard about your success	realize the worth of
held in high regard	set great store by
hope I can return the favor someday	think highly of
I am impressed by/with	we can point with pride
I appreciate the time and effort you	wish you well
expended on	without your dedication and
important contribution	expertise
it was thoughtful of you to	would like to compliment you on

## SENTENCES

As principal of Jerome Elementary School, you might like to know that we think Miss Eurgain is an absolute treasure.

Can you stand one more compliment?

Customers like you are the reason we stay in business.

I'd like to express my appreciation for the knowledgeable and sympathetic care you gave me during my hospitalization for bypass surgery.

I don't know how I would have managed without your help.

If I can repay your kindness, let me know.

I'm impressed!

I sincerely appreciate your time and attention.

I want to express my appreciation to all of you for the extra hours and hard work you put in last week to secure the Gryseworth contract.

I want to tell you how much I appreciate what you are doing for the recycling program in our neighborhood.

My hat's off to you!

Thanks again for your clever and useful suggestion.

The Ridley County School Board would like to add its thanks and appreciation to those of the recipients of the scholarships you made possible.

This past year has been a banner year for the company, and you have contributed significantly to its success.

We are all happy for you.

Well done!

Your efforts have made this possible.  
 Your support is greatly appreciated.  
 You've done it again!

## PARAGRAPHS

As Bette Midler once said, "People are not the best because they work hard. They work hard because they are the best." And you are the best! Know that we appreciate you!

You've been a valued cardmember with Stuyvesant Bank since 1990, and we thank you for the exceptional manner in which you've handled your account. To show our appreciation, we've preapproved you for our premier bankcard, the Gold 100. We think you will find it to be the ultimate in credit card performance.

Please accept the enclosed token of our appreciation for your five years as one of our most dependable and delightful volunteers. We don't know what we would do without you!

Thank you for your timely and excellent solution to the problem of tangled hoses. Only those of us who have struggled with this annoying and time-consuming inconvenience can appreciate what a delight the new boom system will be. You will be receiving an Outstanding Contribution award in May, but I didn't want to wait that long before telling you how pleased and impressed we all are.

All of us here at Legson, Ltd. enjoyed your enthusiastic letter about the quality of our lace goods. We are proud to offer such a wide selection of fine handiwork from all four corners of the globe. Please accept with our appreciation the enclosed 20% discount coupon good on your next order.

Appreciation and thanks go to Angela Messenger and her Documentation Department for a successful transformation of the tracking system. The new equipment and its faster, more accurate method of record-keeping will help keep us in the forefront of the Stout, Old, Mild, Bitter, Family Ales market. Our success here at Marsden & Company is due to an exceptional group of talented employees.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Dr. Rowlands,

Your suggestions for next year's technical forum are much appreciated. I've turned them over to the steering committee, although I suspect you'll be invited to join them. I hope you will accept—your ideas seem as workable as they are useful.

Sincerely yours,

Dear Ms. Lees-Noel:

I'm told that you were the good-hearted soul who kept my desk from overflowing during my sick leave (while still keeping up with your own work).

Instead of the chaos I expected to return to, I was able to start back with a clear slate. I am most appreciative of everything you did. I don't know whether this is a compliment or not, but you did things just the way I would have!

Do call on me if I can ever return the favor.

Sincerely,

Dear Mr. Fitzmarshall:

We were pleased to learn that you received such outstanding service from one of our employees. Be assured that we have passed on your compliments to Ms. Stretton. You will perhaps enjoy knowing that in recognition of her talent and managerial skills, Ms. Stretton has just been promoted to floor supervisor.

We appreciate your taking the time to write us.

Yours truly,

Dear Mrs. Sixsmith,

Thank you for accompanying the fifth and sixth graders to Language Camp last weekend. I understand you chaperoned the group on your own time. Since Ronald arrived home, I've heard dozens of stories of your helpfulness, good humor, and ability to make the camp a home-away-from-home for these youngsters.

We felt a lot better knowing you would be with the group, and we appreciate Ronald's opportunity to spend time with a dynamic adult who's a good role model.

With best wishes,

Dear Ms. Stanley,

The entire department joins me in thanking you for the superb workshop on hard disk filing systems. We all learned a great deal (I was fascinated by your introductory description of early Abyssinian slate files).

I am passing on your brochure to George Hickson in Building 201-BE in case he would be interested in having you speak to his department.

Yours truly,

Dear Judge Whipple,

Congratulations on the editorial you wrote for Sunday's op-ed page. I have followed your career over the years and have been impressed by



your passion for justice, especially for society's most vulnerable people: children, the homeless, and those with disabilities.

My best wishes to you for professional and personal happiness.

Sincerely,

See also: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, CONGRATULATIONS, GOODWILL, THANK YOU.

# Belated Letters

*People who are late are often so much jollier than  
the people who have to wait for them.*

—EDWARD VERRALL LUCAS

One of the most difficult letters to write is the one that is overdue. Every day that passes magnifies our guilt and intensifies our resistance to writing; too often we end up not writing at all.

Centuries ago, Titus Livius advised, “Better late than never.” In the case of a letter, “late” is inconsiderate. “Never” can be unpardonable. Your effort in writing, even though belated, will be appreciated.

## Belated Letters Include

- letters dealing with sensitive issues (see also SENSITIVE)
- letters to family and friends who have written us such lovely, long, newsy letters that we don’t know where to begin to answer them (see also FAMILY)
- refusal and rejection letters (see also REFUSALS)
- sympathy notes for which we feel we have no words (see also SYMPATHY)
- thank-you notes for gifts we didn’t like or that were so generous we were overwhelmed by them (see also THANK YOU)

## How to Say It

- Avoid the situation in the first place by organizing letters to be answered in order of importance. Don’t respond to less difficult letters until you have taken care of those on top of the pile.
- Briefly acknowledge your tardiness and then go directly to the main message.

## What Not to Say

- Don’t go into a long song and dance about how sorry you are for your tardiness, or an even longer explanation of exactly why you

couldn't write earlier. "Don't fill *more* than a page and a half with apologies for not having written sooner!" (Lewis Carroll) Egocentric agonizing about your shortcomings only takes the spotlight off the other person and focuses it on you.

- Don't imply the tardiness is somehow the other person's fault ("I'm always nervous about writing you because you write such beautiful letters" or "I didn't want to hurt your feelings with our rejection, so I put off writing").

## Tips on Writing

- Keep a selection of interesting postcards on hand. When you realize you're going to have trouble writing a letter, send a brief note on a postcard acknowledging the issue and saying you'll write soon. This does away with the sense of something hanging over you. The letter will be twice as easy to write when you get to it because you'll feel virtuous for having sent the postcard.

- Knowing that "the path of later leads to the house of never" (Donald E. Walker), set yourself up for success. Address an envelope to the person. Open a computer file or pick up pen and paper. You'll feel the weight of a half-begun task pulling at you and you will find it easier to finish it, just to get that envelope off your desk.

- Don't feel you have to write three times as much and four times as charmingly because you're late; this kind of pressure will keep you from ever writing. Write the letter you would have written had you written it earlier.

- We aren't the only ones behind in our correspondence. Oscar W. Firkins (in Ina Ten Eyck Firkins, ed., *Memoirs and Letters of Oscar W. Firkins*, 1934) was often late:

"I want to write a word to you this morning to thank you for the kind letter I received some months ago, and to assure you that my silence has meant neither forgetfulness nor indifference."

"Again delay has overtaken me in the matter of response to your letter. Examination time and the preparations for my trip must shoulder part of the responsibility, and the rest must be referred to that immemorial scapegoat, human nature."

"I have long had in mind a letter to you, postponed by the foolish wish we all have to write more and better tomorrow instead of less and worse today."

Sylvia Townsend Warner (in William Maxwell, ed., *Letters: Sylvia Townsend Warner*, Viking Press, 1982) did her share of apologizing:

"It is disgraceful that I have meant for so long to write to you, and put it off for equally long."

“I have begun many letters to you in my mind, and some even on paper, but never finished them.”

“I have been a Hog with Bristles not to have written to you before—though I got back ten days ago I have not had a moment to turn around in since, not to turn around with any feelings of leisure and amplitude, such as I would want when I write to you.”

“You must have thought me very ungrateful in not writing before to thank you for taking so much trouble about my poems. My time has been taken up with visitors.”

## Special Situations

- Although in principle there is zero tolerance for business tardiness—late deliveries, unanswered letters, unfilled orders—it happens. Frequently. Advice in this chapter is useful, but for industrial-strength help, see ADJUSTMENTS and APOLOGIES.

- When late with a “thank you,” don’t take more than a phrase or a sentence to apologize (“My thanks are no less sincere for being so unforgivably late”; “I am sorry not to have told you sooner how much we enjoyed your homemade chutney”). There are not many good excuses for being late with a thank-you note, so don’t offer one—it’s bound to appear feeble. It’s better to say you have no excuse and you’re sorry. Then continue with an expression of your thanks, which should probably be more fervent and well-crafted than if you’d written at once. “The obligation to express gratitude deepens with procrastination. The longer you wait, the more effusive must be the thanks.” (Judith Martin, “Miss Manners”)

## Format

- All belated letters take the format of the letter as it would originally have been written: a handwritten belated thank-you note; a typewritten apology on letterhead stationery for a business tardiness.

## WORDS

absentminded	forgive	overlook	remiss
apologies	inadvertently	pardon	sheepish
distressed	negligence	regret	sorry
embarrassed			

## PHRASES

accept my apology	I am upset about
asleep at the wheel/on the job/ at the switch	I don't know how it happened that intended to write immediately
delayed answering your letter	much to my regret
because	no excuse for
embarrassing to discover that	not from any lack of
excuse the delay	pardon my late response
feel sorry/terrible/bad about	reproach myself
forgive my tardiness	slipped my mind

## SENTENCES

I apologize for not having responded sooner.

I hope my tardiness in answering your question has not greatly inconvenienced you.

I imagine that everyone but me has written by now to congratulate you on your promotion and exciting move to Los Angeles.

I'm sorry for the delay in getting back to you—I've been out of town the past three weeks.

I'm sorry—this letter is badly overdue.

I've been writing you in my head for weeks—it's time to get it down on paper.

My delay in acknowledging the touching gift of your father's stamp collection is simply inexcusable.

My tardiness is due to bouts of extreme busyness and bouts of extreme laziness—I don't know which is worse.

Our best wishes for your 75th birthday are no less warm and heartfelt for being so late.

Our holiday greetings are late this year, frankly for no good reason.

Please forgive me for not writing sooner to thank you for the unique and useful fleur-de-lis letter-opener.

Please forgive the delay in responding to your letter of June 14.

## PARAGRAPHS

Well, yes, it's me responding with my usual promptness. I wish that I had any kind of excuse (I've been hospitalized, I've been imprisoned,

I've been on a secret mission, I'm a finalist with Publisher's Clearing House), but sadly I do not.

I might have to borrow Groucho Marx's explanation for his belated letter: "Excuse me for not answering your letter sooner, but I've been so busy not answering letters that I couldn't get around to not answering yours in time."

Many and fervent (but, alas, belated) good wishes to you on your birthday. I've got a bad sector in my brain, and can't remember if it was this year or last year that I sent you the birthday card with the warthogs on it. However, I'm betting on last year.

We apologize for the delay in scheduling your tree trimming. The cleanup after the May 30 storm left us shorthanded for everything else. A crew is available at 8 a.m. on the following dates: June 6, 9, 10. Please call with a day that is convenient for you.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Maurice Garcia,

Please accept our apology for not letting you know that the Carlist desktop organizer (# CL-5521) you ordered on February 11 is temporarily out of stock. You are correct: three weeks is a long time to wait for something billed for same-day shipping. In the normal way, you would have received a postcard asking whether you wished to wait until we had the item in stock or wished to change or cancel your order.

As you've ordered the organizer from another company, we will cancel your order with Wallace Office Supply. In the meantime, I am enclosing a coupon good for 20% off your next Wallace order. We regret the inconvenience to you and look forward to serving you more effectively in the future.

Dear Roberta Alden,

Please excuse the delay in sending you your copy of the signed contract (enclosed). Mr. Dreiser will be calling you next week about the schedule.

Sincerely,

Clyde Griffiths

From: "PT" <akadoc@email.net>

To: "Mary" <MMM@email.net>

Date: Tue, 15 Aug 2000 11:26:14-0500

Hi, I have a good excuse for not writing. I've been thinking. For example, did you hear about the guy who collected paste jewelery? He was hooked on faux onyx! Ha, ha, ha...

Dear Reverend Charwell,

I said I would notify you as soon as we made a decision on filling our associate position. I imagine that, not having heard from us, you assumed correctly that we had offered the position to another candidate. However, I am sorry to be so late letting you know myself.

We were impressed with your credentials, especially with your achievements in Porthminster and with the references from Hubert Conway and Jean Tasbrugh. In the end, however, we decided in favor of the candidate with more experience in homiletics.

Best wishes to you for continued good work in your ministry.

From: BJZG@email.net

To: RMK@email.net

Date: Fri, 7 Jul 2000 12:33:33 EDT

Subject: a major case of guilt—yea, a boatload

Oh, right. I neglect you shamefully and what do you do in return? You send me a present! I am scheduling hari-kiri for next Wednesday at 11:20. Be there.

Dear Dorcy Aldrich,

Please forgive our tardiness in thanking you for your generous and valued donation to the Hatcher Ide Community Affairs Fund. Because moneys received in our current fundraising drive are being matched, your contribution is a significant one for us.

Thank you for being one of our most consistent and openhanded supporters.

See also: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, APOLOGIES, SENSITIVE, THANK YOU.

# Collection Letters

*The object of collection letters is to get the money without losing the customer.*

—N.H. AND S.K. MAGER

When writing collection letters you have two goals that work against each other: you want the customer to pay the overdue account and you want to keep the customer's goodwill and business. Well-written, effective collection letters pay off handsomely, not only because of the retrieved income but also because of the delinquent accounts that become dependable accounts.

Collection attempts most often begin as past-due reminders from a company's billing office, accounting department, or credit division. When the account is thirty, sixty, or ninety days overdue, the first of a series of collection letters will be sent. Only when the company's series of increasingly aggressive collection letters is ignored is the account turned over to a collection agency. Many large firms use statistical models to predict which accounts need more aggressive action early on. Remember, too, that given a large population of overdue accounts, the single most effective collection method may be a pleasant telephone reminder.

## Collection Letters Include

- announcements that the account is being turned over to lawyer/ collection agency
- letters to lawyer/ collection agency
- personal collection letters: friend/relative
- reminders
- series of increasingly insistent letters
- thank you for payment

## How to Say It

- Collection letters can reach levels of high art in their quest to collect on an overdue bill without losing the customer's goodwill. They are always courteous and in the beginning they assume that the customer intends to pay but has been forgetful. Each letter sent to an overdue



account is written as though it is the last; you are optimistic, appreciative, confident. Include: customer, order, or invoice number; date and amount of purchase; items purchased; original payment due date; date by which you expect payment now; references to previous letters about the outstanding balance; suggested payment plan; other descriptive information. Leave enough time (two to three weeks between letters) to give the customer a chance to pay. End each letter with a definite request as well as a statement that if payment has been sent this letter can be ignored. Include a postage-paid reply envelope to encourage prompt response. A suggested plan featuring six collection letters is given below. Your own needs may be met by a series of four or ten, or you may prefer to vary the messages.

- Collection letter 1: After sending several statements indicating the past-due status of the account (perhaps with a stamped message or reminder sticker that says “Past Due” or “Second Notice”), you send a gentle, friendly letter pointing out the overdue payment. Your letter is brief, saying simply that a stated amount is so many weeks or months overdue. You pleasantly request payment.
- Collection letter 2: You are a little more insistent and remind the customer that payment still hasn’t been received. In a second paragraph, ask for explanations or suggest several face-saving reasons why the person hasn’t paid (bill was overlooked, was lost in the mail, customer was away). Close with an expression of your confidence that the payment will be sent at once.
- Collection letter 3: Your tone becomes more urgent, your letter is longer, and you give the customer one or more good reasons to pay the bill: it will protect their credit rating and reputation; it is a matter of fairness/justice/conscience; it is the responsible thing to do; it will make them feel good; it is a matter of their self-respect; it is in their own best self-interest. In this or the next letter, propose two payment schedules that are acceptable to you, and offer the customer a choice. Divide the past-due amount into weekly, semi-monthly, monthly, or two lump-sum payments.
- Collection letter 4: Your message is increasingly stern, and you present additional arguments for payment: you have carried out your obligations by providing the service or shipping the goods and now they must carry out theirs; the amount is too small to lose their credit rating over it; the customer wouldn’t want to be placed on your delinquent list; they wouldn’t want to be reported to the trade credit bureau; they will not be able to place any future orders with you. For the first time, you mention the possibility of turning their account over to a collection agent or attorney for collection.
- Collection letter 5: By now you assume the customer is aware of the problem and is deliberately avoiding payment. In a strong message, you announce that you’re obliged to take other action, to turn the account over to a collection agency for collection or to a lawyer for

legal action. (If you opt for legal action, word your letter with your attorney's advice.) Even now, however, give the customer ten days in which to make arrangements to settle the account before taking action. Be clear that the action can be avoided if the customer responds at once.

- Collection letter 6: The final letter represents your belief that the customer will pay only if compelled. You say that the account is being transferred to a stated collection agency or to a stated law firm as of a stated date. This letter simply announces the action you're taking; you no longer try to get the customer to pay.
- When you write to the collection agency, give complete information: name, address, telephone numbers, account number, copies of all correspondence, statements, data sheets.

### What Not to Say

- Don't threaten the customer with a collection agency or legal action until you are ready to pursue these avenues. If you say you are turning the account over to a collection agency in ten days, do so.
- Don't use words like "failure" ("your failure to respond," "failure to pay"); "ignore" ("you have ignored our letters"); "insist" or "demand" ("we insist that you send payment at once"). They make the other person feel small, which will not endear you to them.
- Don't use negative tactics (insults, name-calling, bullying, sarcasm, arrogance, and verbal wrist-slapping); they produce only negative results and tarnish your company's reputation.
- Avoid the arch, pseudo-puzzled, and ineffective tone sometimes seen: "We simply cannot comprehend why someone with such a good credit rating..." "We are at a loss to understand why we have not heard from you." "We've been scratching our heads..."
- Don't say anything that could be construed as libelous.

### Tips on Writing

- Be tactful. Even people with poor credit histories often feel they are doing a good job given their circumstances. A poorly written collection letter can inspire feelings of anger, self-pity, or helplessness, none of which leads to the writing of a check.

- Space collection letters. In the beginning send them monthly, immediately after a payment date is missed. Allow enough time for the customer to respond or for delays caused by illness, busy periods, or vacations. Later, send letters every ten days to two weeks. The more stubborn the account, the closer together you space the letters. When the account has a good credit history, you don't send letters quite as often.

- Credit and financial matters are, theoretically at least, confidential. Make every attempt to safeguard the credit information you give and receive.
- Don't send collection letters to a person's place of business where others might open the mail. For the same reasons of privacy, don't use postcards to send collection messages. You don't want to embarrass your customer or leave yourself open to complaint or legal action.

## Special Situations

- When trying to collect from a customer who reports adverse circumstances (illness, unemployment, financial reverses), work out a feasible payment program even if it is a generous one. A background check will indicate whether the person is experiencing difficulties that merit special attention. Reducing a debt by even a small amount is a success for both creditor and debtor and is worthy of your best efforts.
- To remind a friend or family member of an overdue loan, help the person save face by including an excuse ("I know how busy you are..."; "I wonder if you forgot about..."; "Am I mistaken, or did we agree that you'd repay the loan September 1?"). It will be helpful if you have drawn up a loan agreement or a letter stating the terms. When writing a second time, include a photocopy of your agreement.

## Format

- Collection letters are always typed on letterhead stationery.
- Form letters are used for the first few collection letters in a series. The first can be a simple reminder with spaces to fill in the amount and due date.

## WORDS

action	explanation	propose
advise	extend	reminder
arrangement	liability	repayment
balance	misunderstanding	request
circumstances	necessitate	require
collect	nonpayment	satisfy
concerned	notice	settle
cooperation	outstanding	statement
creditworthiness	overdue	terms

debt	overlooked	unpaid
disappointed	oversight	urge
embarrass	past-due	

## PHRASES

account past due	clear your account before the next
accounts receivable	statement period
act upon	credit rating/standing/record
amount/balance due/owed	damaging to your credit record/
appreciate hearing from you	standing/rating
at least a partial payment	delinquent status of your account
be good enough to/so good as to	despite our notice of a month ago
behind with your payments	did not respond
call/direct your attention to	discuss this with you
easy payment plan	please let us hear from you by
escaped your attention	please mail/send us
final opportunity	pressing need for action
friendly reminder	prompt payment/remittance
have heard nothing from you	reasonable payment arrangement
how can we work together to	recourse to legal action
immediately payable	reduce your balance
important to resolve this matter	resolve this matter
in arrears	review of our files/your account
it is our policy	shows
I understand and appreciate your position, but	seriously delinquent
just a reminder/to remind you	several statements and letters
legal action/advice/steps	since you haven't replied to our last letter

let us hear from you right away	so that you can maintain your credit
mail today	standing
must hear from you	special appeal
mutually satisfactory solution	strongly suggest
no activity on your account	suggested payment plan solution
not made a payment since	to avoid additional expenses, delays,
now due on your account	and unpleasantness
official notice	unacceptable delay
outstanding balance	valued customer
overdue account	we haven't heard from you
past-due amount	we would appreciate your sending
	us
perhaps you didn't realize	without further delay

## SENTENCES

After 120 days, we normally / routinely / automatically turn an account over to our attorneys for collection.

A postage-paid envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Despite our last three reminders, your account remains unpaid.

Enclosed is a copy of your last statement, showing a balance of \$457.89 that is ninety days overdue.

I am sorry, but we are unable to extend you any more time for the payment of your outstanding balance of \$896.78.

If we do not hear from you at once / within the next ten days, we will be obliged to pursue other collection procedures / we will have no choice but to engage the services of a collection agency.

If you have already sent your check / paid your balance of \$324.56, please ignore this notice.

If you haven't already mailed in your payment, won't you take a moment to mail it today?

If your financial circumstances make it impossible to pay the full amount at this time, please let us know as I am sure that we can work out an acceptable schedule of installment payments.

If your payment is not received by June 1, we will be obliged to turn your account over to the Costello Collection Agency.

It is important that you take some action before this unpaid balance affects your credit rating.

Just a reminder: your account balance of \$106.87 is thirty days past due.

May we have your check for \$89.43 by return mail?

Our records show your account to be seriously in arrears.

Please call or write to make arrangements.

Please forward payment in the amount of \$269.89 promptly.

Please mail your check by May 5 so that no future action will be necessary.

Thank you for your cooperation/attention to this matter/for taking care of this at once.

Thank you for your recent remittance, which has allowed us to reactivate your account.

There may be a good explanation for your lack of response to our requests for payment of your overdue account—won't you tell us about it?

This matter must be resolved without further delay.

Unfortunately your payment has not been received.

We are disappointed not to have heard from you about your overdue balance of \$1785.97.

We ask for your cooperation in paying the balance due.

We expect to hear from you by July 15 without fail.

We have sent a number of friendly requests for payment but have had no response from you.

We hope that you will take advantage of this last invitation to settle your account and to avoid further damage to your credit rating as well as the costs of any possible legal action.

We look forward to hearing from you.

We must know your intentions immediately.

We provide prompt service, and we expect prompt payment.

We resort to legal action with the greatest reluctance.

We would be happy to work with you to arrange an easy payment plan suited to your circumstances.

Why not take care of this matter right now?

You are a much-appreciated customer, and we hope there is no problem.

You may not realize that your account is ninety days past due.

Your account has been turned over to Darley and Havison, our attorneys, for collection and, if necessary, legal action.

Your payment of \$876.23 will be appreciated.

Your prompt payment will protect your good credit rating.

You will want to mail your check today so that you can continue using your credit privileges.

## PARAGRAPHS

Enclosed are copies of your statements, year to date. Please check them against your records, and let us know if they do not agree with ours. We show an outstanding balance of \$1,236.90.

The nonpayment of your balance is expensive for both of us: it is costing you your excellent credit record as well as monthly service charges and it is costing us lost revenues and extra accounting expenses. We strongly urge you to make out a check right now for the balance due on your account (a self-addressed stamped envelope is enclosed for your convenience). If you wish to discuss some financial difficulty or arrange for a special payment schedule, please call 800/555-1331 today so that we can avoid reclassifying your account as delinquent.

The Locksley-Jones Collection Agency has been authorized by Elliot Lumber to collect the \$980.54 past due amount on your account. According to information turned over to us by Elliot, you have not responded to requests for payment made over a period of eight months. This letter serves as your official notice that collection proceedings will begin ten days from the date of this letter unless you contact us to make some satisfactory arrangement for payment.

Thank you for your payment of \$763.21, received today. We are happy to be able to remove you from our collection system and to re-establish your line of credit. We do this with the understanding that you will keep your account current in the future. We hope to continue to serve you with all your plumbing and electrical needs.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Ms. Phippard:

Your account is now ninety days overdue in the amount of \$85.89. As you are one of our longtime customers with an excellent credit rating, we assume this is a simple oversight.

Thank you for taking care of this matter promptly.

Sincerely,

Dear Mr. Landauer,

We would like to remind you once again that we have not received any payment on your account balance of \$597.45. If you need additional time or would like to arrange a special payment schedule, please call the credit department today or tomorrow at extension 91. Otherwise, we will expect to receive a check in the mail.

We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

TO: Nolan Associates  
FROM: Charney Office Supplies  
DATE: March 6, 2002  
RE: Past-Due Account

We have alerted you several times (see our statements of November 4 and December 7 and our letters of January 6 and February 5) that your account has a balance of \$1,059.32 outstanding. Because your credit rating could be adversely affected by continuing nonpayment, we hope that you will send us something on account immediately.

We need to hear from you this week concerning your plans for repayment. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dear Ms. Seebach:

We are concerned about your past-due account of \$473.23 and your lack of response to our inquiries about it. We would like to hear from you within the next ten days so that we are not obliged to seek other, more serious means of satisfying this debt.

Please consider protecting your credit rating by sending us a check promptly. You will be glad you did.

Sincerely,

Dear Stephen Bracebridge:

Your account (# 8103-484-2329) is seriously in arrears. As we have had no response to our reminders, we are obliged to consider collecting the past-due amount of \$12,489.19 with the help of a collection agency.

We like to avoid this way of removing unpaid accounts from our books—both for your sake and ours. Your credit standing will be affected by such action, and we lose time and money trying to collect money that is, in all justice, owed to us.

We will transfer this account to a collection agency on April 3. We would, however, be happy to work out a payment schedule with you if you will call before then.

Sincerely,

Dear Algy,

I dislike reminding you yet again, but it's now been six weeks since I lent you \$200 "for just a few days." If I could just forget about it, I would, but as it happens I need that money myself—right away.

Shall I stop by after work to pick it up or do you want to drop it off at the house? Let me know.

Sincerely,



See also: CREDIT, FOLLOW-UP, REQUESTS.

# Complaints

*If you don't write to complain, you'll never receive your order. If you do write, you'll receive the merchandise before your angry letter reaches its destination.*

—ARTHUR BLOCH

If you're writing a letter of complaint, you're not alone. Millions write them every year. One multifooods corporation receives three hundred thousand complaining phone calls and letters per year.

Some complaints can be handled by telephone. In general, however, a letter of complaint (also known as a claim letter or consumer action letter) is more effective. First, you've put something tangible on someone's desk—eventually it must be dealt with. Second, you can be more tactful in a letter. Third, the details are conveyed in an accessible form (it's hard to imagine someone on the other end of the telephone taking down dates, names, and invoice numbers as carefully as you would spell them out in a letter). Fourth, you have a record of your complaint.

When you have a general, community-wide complaint, see **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**. If you are responding to a complaint, see **ADJUSTMENTS** or even **APOLOGIES**.

## Write Letters of Complaint About

- billing/collection/financial/ordering errors
- children: misbehavior/damage by
- community or neighborhood problems: adult bookstores/ unkempt property/noisy parties
- delays: late shipment/refund/merchandise/supplies/payment
- employees: incompetent/rude/inappropriate behavior
- legislative problems: high taxes/unfair laws/pending bills
- merchandise: defective/damaged/dangerous/overpriced/missing parts, misleading advertising, bait-and-switch tactics
- mistakes, misunderstandings, personal errors
- neighbors (see also **NEIGHBORS**)
- pets: damage by/attacks by
- policies: unfavorable/restrictive/discriminatory
- schools: undeserved reprimands/undesirable programs

## How to Say It

- State the problem: what it is, when you noticed it, how it inconvenienced you.
- Provide factual details. For a problem with merchandise: date and place of purchase, sales slip number, description of product, serial or model number, amount paid, name of salesperson, your account number or charge card number. For a problem with a rude or inefficient service person: date and time of the incident, name of person involved (if you know it), where it occurred, names of witnesses, description of behavior. For a problem with printed inaccuracies, misstatements, or incomplete information: date, section, page, column, and incorrect material; correct data; your phone number. For a problem with the airlines: flight number, dates of flight, points of origin and termination, description of problem or incident, where and when it occurred.
- Include relevant documentation: sales slips, receipts, warranties or guarantees, previous correspondence, pictures of damaged item, repair or service orders, canceled checks, contracts, paid invoices. (Send photocopies of your documents.)
- Tell why it's important to resolve your problem.
- State clearly what you expect from the person or company: refund, replacement, exchange, repair. If you want money, state how much. Request a reasonable solution.
- Suggest a deadline for the action.
- Give your name, address, and home and work telephone numbers.
- Close with your confidence in the other person's desire to do the right thing and ability to take care of the problem to your satisfaction ("I am sure you will find a solution for this problem"; "I am confident that you will want to replace this defective answering machine"). Assume that the person who receives your letter will be helpful and let this assurance show.

## What Not to Say

- Don't use subjective phrases like "I want," "I feel," and "I need." Figures, dates, facts, photographs, and documentation are more persuasive.
- Don't indulge in sarcasm, accusations, abuse, recriminations, blaming, smart remarks, exaggerations, or emotional outbursts—unless, of course, your only aim is to vent your anger on someone. If you want an adjustment, an apology, or other positive response, avoid antagonizing the person who is in the best position to help you. Negative letters are not only ineffective, they make you look foolish (and feel foolish later, when you think about it).

- Don't be negative ("I don't suppose you'll do anything about this"). Assume the other person wants to be helpful (at least until you find out otherwise).
- Don't threaten to sue. This is generally seen as a bluff; people who actually sue leave this to their lawyers. You might—if you mean this—say that you are going to take the case to small claims court. Sometimes this can lead to a quick, inexpensive resolution. (Note that there are time limits on certain legal actions.)
- Don't accuse anyone of lies, unprofessionalism, cheating, stealing, or misrepresentation. You may be creating legal problems for yourself.
- Don't hint for free products or "compensation" beyond what you are due.

## Tips on Writing

- Write your letter soon after the incident or problem; details are fresher in your mind, and your chances of getting a good response are greater.
  - Be brief: a one-page letter has the best chance of being read.
  - Be courteous: the person to whom you are writing may have had nothing to do with the error and will be more willing to help you if you are calm and reasonable. When appropriate, include positive remarks: why you chose that product, how long you've used the company's services or products, that you think this incident must be an exception to the rule.
  - Focus on one complaint or issue per letter. When you report in the same letter a rude salesperson, insufficient parking, a mispriced item, and a can opener too dull to open anything, you are likely to get (at most) a blanket apology and no particular action on any of the individual problems.
  - Place more emphasis on how the problem can be resolved and less emphasis on the details of the mix-up, your reactions and feelings, and what a disaster it has all been. Your letter should be oriented toward resolving the problem or arriving at a solution.
  - Help the other person save face. If you act as though only your threats and string-pulling are bringing about a settlement, you deny the other person their sense of themselves as decent, generous people.
  - If your complaint has several components (list of ordered items missing, series of events), set off these items in a numbered or bulleted list.
  - Keep a record of every phone call, letter, or other action you take, along with the dates, the names and titles of those you dealt with, and a summary of the results.

- Keep the originals of all correspondence, canceled checks, sales slips, and supporting documents.

- Don't send copies to third parties when you first write a company; give it a chance to settle the problem. If you receive no satisfaction, subsequent letters can be copied to regulatory agencies, trade associations, or consumer advocate offices. On your letter to the company, use "cc:" to indicate those who are receiving a copy.

- "Complain to one who can help you." (Yugoslavian proverb) There's nothing less effective than writing a great letter to the wrong person. In general, send a complaint letter to a specific person. A letter addressed to nobody in particular ends up on nobody's list of responsibilities. When writing to lawmakers or government officials, check the library reference department for listings in *U.S. Government Manual* (new edition every year), *Who's Who in American Politics*, and state and federal handbooks and directories. *Federal Information Centers*, which lists contacts across the country when you need assistance from the federal government, is available free from Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009. When writing businesses, obtain names and titles of company officials by calling the company or from directories of U.S. businesses in the reference section of your library. Addressing a letter to the company's consumer affairs department is a good choice; these departments specialize in problems like yours. If you receive no satisfaction from the company, pursue the matter with: your local Better Business Bureau; a local, county, or state consumer agency; the consumer division of the state attorney general's office; your state representatives; a relevant consumer group; trade association; the appropriate regulatory government agency. When appealing to one of these groups, include a description of the problem, a list of the steps you've taken, and the names and titles of those you've contacted. If you're involved in a disagreement with a professional, write the state board that licenses the person.

- *The Consumer Action Handbook* is a useful 144-page publication updated yearly and available free by writing: Handbook, Federal Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009 or by calling 800/688-9889 (for weekly updates click on Handbook at [www.pueblo.gsa.gov](http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov)). In addition to preventive advice (consumer tips on car repair, purchase and leasing; shopping from home; avoiding consumer and investment fraud; home improvement and financing; choosing and using credit cards wisely), the handbook tells you where to direct complaints, listing contact information for national consumer organizations, corporate consumer relations departments, automobile manufacturers, better business bureaus throughout the country, trade associations, third-party dispute resolution programs, federal agencies as well as state and local consumer protection offices. You can also go to <http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/complaintresources.htm> where the Federal Consumer Information Center offers a list of resources for consumer

complaints about medicines, drugs, and medical devices; health clubs and exercise equipment; veterinary products; airline baggage and service; auto dealers; banking; online services, spam or junk e-mail; telephone service.

- If you write many complaint letters, you might like *Shocked, Appalled, and Dismayed! How to Write Letters of Complaint That Get Results* by Ellen Phillips.

## Special Situations

- In a dispute about a credit-card purchase, contact the credit card company to withhold payment while the problem is being resolved (read the information on the back of your statement for details). Most companies have forms for this, asking for your name, account number, credit card statement reference number, amount, store where purchased, and description of the item and the problem.

- To protest an increase in rent or in auto, medical, or homeowner insurance, include: name, address, telephone number, apartment or policy number, years you have been renting or insured with that company, history of rates, reasons for your objection. Ask that someone call you to discuss the matter.

- When there are issues with your child's school, assume nothing at the outset. Begin your letter with questions: "Can you tell me...?" "Is it true that...?" Too often, misunderstandings crop up somewhere between school and home. Clarify the issues before asking for changes or apologies.

- When schools relay complaints to parents, phone calls are the first avenue of communication, but sometimes letters must be sent. In writing parents, the school official's points of reference will be "tact" and "fact." State what happened briefly and objectively. Suggest a date and time for a meeting or ask that the parent call you. Enclose a copy of the school regulations the child violated or refer the parent to the student handbook. State what action is being taken or may be taken by the school.

- When you are one of a large group protesting an action, product, service, or corporate behavior, send individual, personalized letters rather than form letters or group-generated complaints. Organizations are more likely to respond to one well-written, original letter than to hundreds of mimeographed postcards. In some cases, the great number of complaints is persuasive, but in general you may be wasting time and postage on mass-produced complaints.

- When writing to an elected official to recommend a course of action, mention the issue or legislation you're writing about in the first sentence or in a subject line ("Re: property taxes" or "Subject: HR4116"). State your opinion clearly ("I strongly disapprove of.../I

urge you to..."). Give reasons for your position. If there are several, list them separately, set off by numbers, asterisks, or bullets. Indicate the course of action you would like the person to take or the response that you expect. Offer to serve as a resource if the issue is something you are particularly knowledgeable about. End with an expression of appreciation for their interest and time.

- Sometimes apologies are necessary on both sides of a dispute. Even when you have a legitimate complaint, it's possible that you have in some small way aggravated the situation. Making your own apology is not only honest (if called for) but is often helpful in eliciting the response you want.

## Format

- Business letterhead, business-personal stationery, or personal letterhead are all good choices for a complaint letter.
- Type the letter if possible. If you must handwrite it, be sure it is legible and neat.

## WORDS

action	inaccurate	misprint	resolve
adjustment	inadequate	misquote	restore
agreed-upon	inappropriate	misrepresented	short-sighted
compensation	incident	missing	slipshod
concerned	incomplete	misstatement	thoughtless
damaged	inconsistent	mistake	uncooperative
defective	inconvenient	misunderstand- ing	unfortunate
disagreement	incorrect	nonfunctioning	unfounded
disappointed	inexperienced	off-putting	unjustifiable
displeased	inferior	omission	unpleasant
dispute	insufficient	overcharged	unprofessional
dissatisfaction	lax	overestimated	unqualified
embarrassing	misapprehen- sion	overlooked	unreasonable
exasperating	miscalculation	oversight	unreliable
experience	misconception	regrettable	unsatisfactory
fault	misconstrued	reimburse	unsound

flaw	mishandled	remake	untidy
grievance	misinformed	repair	untrue
ill-advised	misinterpreted	repay	unwarranted
impolite	misleading	replace	

## PHRASES

a mix-up in my order	correct your records
appealing to you for help	defective upon arrival
are you aware that	does not meet our performance standards
as a longtime customer	expect to hear from you soon
call to your immediate attention	may not be aware that
has not met my expectations	not up to your usual high standards
hope to resolve this problem	register a complaint about serious omission/problem
I am concerned about	under the conditions of the warranty
I feel certain you would want to know that	unpleasant incident
it has come to my attention that	unsatisfactory performance
it is with reluctance that I must inform you	we were unhappy with
it was disconcerting to find that	with all possible speed
I was displeased/distressed/disturbed/ offended/disappointed by	would like credit for
I wish to be reimbursed for	you have generally given us excellent service, but
I would like to alert you to	

## SENTENCES

Anything you can do to speed matters up/resolve this problem will be greatly appreciated.

Here are the facts.

I am confident that you can resolve this.

I am expecting the courtesy of a prompt reply.

I am writing regarding my last bill, invoice # G4889, dated August 15, 2002.



I believe that an apology is due us.

I expect an adjustment to be made as soon as possible.

I hope you will take this complaint in the helpful spirit in which it is meant.

I know you will want to see that such an incident does not occur again.

I like your product but I object strongly to your advertising.

I'm concerned about Coach Ingelsant's angry, abusive manner with the junior soccer players.

I'm confident that we can resolve this matter to our mutual satisfaction.

I regret/am sorry to inform you of the following unpleasant situation.

I strongly oppose your position on this weapons system.

It is my understanding that it will be repaired/replaced at your expense.

I will send a check for the balance as soon as I receive a corrected statement.

I wish to receive credit on my account for this item.

I would appreciate a telephone call from you about this situation.

I would like a refund in the amount of \$49.99.

I would like to clear up this misunderstanding as soon as possible.

Let me know what is being done.

Please call the principal's office to arrange a meeting with the principal, the school counselor, and myself regarding Christie's suspension.

Please contact me within three business days to make arrangements for rectifying the situation.

Please let me hear from you at your earliest convenience.

Please let me know what options are available to me.

Thank you for your prompt assistance with this situation/problem.

The following situation has come to my attention.

The most satisfactory solution for us would be for you to send us a replacement lamp and reimburse us for the cost of mailing the defective lamp back to you.

There was too little feedback to us during the design of the #2 unit.

This product has been unsatisfactory in several respects.

We experienced the following problem in your store/restaurant/hotel last week.

We would like to resolve this situation without delay/without having recourse to the Better Business Bureau or Small Claims Court.

Will you please check on this?

## PARAGRAPHS

I received the leather patchwork travel bag today (copies of catalog page and invoice enclosed), but the matching billfold was not included. Please send me one as soon as possible, in burgundy to match the bag. Thank you.

Five weeks ago I mailed you my check for our stay at the Vörös Csillig in Budapest, and I have not yet received confirmation of our reservations. As the rest of my itinerary depends on whether we are able to stay in Budapest, I would appreciate an immediate phone call from you.

Channel 12's insistence on running inappropriate programming between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., when many young people are watching, means that this family at least will no longer turn to Channel 12 for any of its news, entertainment, or programs.

Please find enclosed a bracelet, a necklace, and a pair of earrings. We would appreciate either repair or replacement of these items. The bracelet has a broken clasp, the gold on the earrings appears to be chipped, and the silver finish is overlaying the gemstone on the necklace. In each case, dissatisfied customers of our store returned the items to us. Your immediate attention to this matter will be greatly appreciated.

I'm enclosing a photocopy of a collection letter I received from your agency. This is the sixth letter I have received about this account. Although my first initial and last name are the same as the person responsible for it, we have nothing else in common. I marked each of the earlier letters "incorrect address" and returned them to you. Please verify the correct address of your correspondent. I will expect a letter from you stating that my name and address have been removed from your files and that my credit rating has not been affected by this error.

My order (#578942-E) for two dozen Shipley short wave radios, placed three weeks ago, has not yet been received. I was told to expect them within the week. Will you please check to see if the order has gone astray? We need them immediately.

I object to the tactics used in your telephone sales efforts. Today a caller identified herself as someone from the credit bureau. After hearing the words "credit bureau" I stayed attentively on the line. It was only after several minutes of trying to understand what was wrong with my credit rating that I realized I was being asked to buy life insurance. I think your approach is deceitful. Enclosed is a copy of the letter I have written to the Better Business Bureau complaining of it.

Thank you for your fifty-six-page report on your department's activities over the past six months. The graphics are outstanding. However, while there is much to reflect on in the text, I find many questions unanswered and several important issues left unaddressed. I would like to discuss with you the kinds of information I need to see in a departmental semiannual report. Please phone my secretary to set up an appointment.

Imagine our embarrassment when we served one of your Paramount Hams for Easter, and none of our guests were able to eat it because it was excessively salty. I would like a refund for the inedible ham (label and store receipt enclosed). Also, can you give me any good reasons for ever buying another Trotter and Duff Paramount Ham? I don't like writing someone off on the basis of a single error, but one bad ham is one too many.

The Abbeville Faxphone 200 that I ordered from you two weeks ago receives documents but will not transmit them. Several phone calls to your service department (I was, of course, unable to fax them) about this serious problem have been unhelpful. The only information I was given was that I was not to return the machine without prior approval. Please send such approval immediately.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Mr. Tallant:

As you know, a great deal of our work is coordinated with Harvey Crane Construction. They must complete their paving and other operations before the median work on Pearl Street can begin.

I have seen no progress on their part for about a month. Their delays mean that we incur such damages as loss of production, lower profits, winter protection costs, remobilization, accelerated schedules (overtime), and barricade rental—to name just a few items.

As these costs and damages will necessarily be passed on to you, you may want to check into the situation.

Sincerely,

Dear Mr. Thornton,

This is the third time we have contacted you about your dog, Buck. The neighborhood children continue to be frightened of him, and refuse to play outdoors when he is in your yard. There have been several reports of him snapping at the children.

When would be a good time to discuss this situation with you? We would like to come to some agreement without going to the authorities.

I hope to hear from you very soon.

Sincerely yours,

Dear cummings writing machine company,

i would like an immediate replacement for this typewriter. i bought it on june 3 of this year from 'tulips' in cambridge, massachusetts (sales slip enclosed), but, as you can see, it will not produce capital letters.

the 'tulips' people tell me that the manufacturer is responsible for all

defects. please let me know at once how you plan to supply me with a typewriter that types capital letters.

yours truly,

Dear Mr. Abednego,

When I bought my first insurance policy with the Independent W. Diddlesex Insurance Company, I was told that buying my auto, homeowners, and life insurances from you would guarantee me a 20% reduction over the rates I would normally pay separately. Now that I have switched my life insurance to Diddlesex to obtain this complete coverage, I find that I am paying substantially the same rates as before.

Will you please check to see why I am not getting the lower rates, and let me know as soon as possible?

Sincerely,

Dear Mr. Bellman:

We have come to expect a high degree of judgment and integrity from the Calcutta Tape and Sealing Wax Office. It was therefore as surprising as it was distressing when the last shipment was found to be substandard.

Substitutions were made without our permission—invariably a substitution of an inferior product at the original price. In two instances, quantities were not the quantities ordered (they were smaller), with no equivalent adjustment made on the invoice. I am enclosing a copy of our order, a copy of your invoice, and a list of what we actually received. I would appreciate hearing from you immediately on what we can do not only to remedy the current shipment but also to ensure that this doesn't happen again.

Sincerely,

Dear Mr. Atterbury:

Before scheduling an appointment with you to discuss the incorporation of my business, I asked your secretary about your legal fees. He told me you charge \$100 an hour. I was therefore very surprised to received a bill for \$350 when I spent no more than one hour with you.

I will appreciate an explanation of my bill. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dear Ms. Scanlon,

We have been renting Apartment 206 at 1935 Chicago Avenue for the past four years and have been pleased with our situation until just recently, when new tenants moved into Apartment 306.

We have spoken to Mr. Lonigan and Ms. Branahan about the frequent parties, arguments, and loud noises after 11:00 p.m., and we have also

asked the building manager to do what she could. However, we think you need to look into this situation yourself.

Please let us know what we can expect.

Sincerely yours,

Dear Wheatley Office Products:

On April 3, I purchased your four-drawer, self-locking EZ-Open File Cabinet, serial number 007800, from your Wheatley outlet on Broadway. I paid a sale price of \$329.99 plus tax for the unit.

Unfortunately, the file cabinet does not function as claimed. It self-locks arbitrarily; half the time it does, half the time it doesn't, and no one is able to predict just when it will do which. The one-touch unlocking mechanism does not work at all, which means that usually the drawers have to be unlocked manually with the "emergency only" key. Even when the drawers are not locked, they are difficult to open because of a design problem with overlapping inside shelving.

Mr. Denny Swinton, who sold me the unit, informs me that because the unit was on sale I am unable to return it. I am certain, however, that, sale price or no, I have a right to expect that the unit will perform as promised.

I would like to hear within the next several days that a truck will be coming from Wheatley to pick up the defective unit and that my purchase price will be refunded.

Sincerely,

Dear Dr. Blenkinsop,

As you know, we have been satisfied patients of yours for the past six years. However, I wonder if you are aware that the condition of your waiting room is off-putting. The carpet rarely appears vacuumed, the plastic plants are thick with dust, and the magazines and children's playthings are strewn about, apparently untouched from one of our visits to the next. Hygiene seems particularly important in a healthcare environment, and, although I know what an excellent physician you are, I can't help worrying about how clean everything else is.

I hope you find this letter helpful rather than unpleasant—it was written with the best intentions.

Sincerely,

See also: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, ADJUSTMENTS, APOLOGIES, NEIGHBORS, ORDERS, RESPONSES.

# Congratulations

*To hear how special and wonderful we are is endlessly enthralling.*

—GAIL SHEEHY

Some of the most delightful words we receive—right up there with “I love you”—is the letter that begins, “Congratulations!” Because it is rarely obligatory and because its contents are wholly positive, the congratulations note adds a glow to any personal or business relationship. And you don’t have to wait for big news to send one. Small landmarks and successes have a sweetness all their own, and the recipient of your note will long remember your thoughtfulness.

## Occasions That Call for Letters of Congratulations

- achievements/awards/honors/prizes/speeches/publications/recognition
- adoption or birth of child
- anniversaries: business/years of service/wedding (see ANNIVERSARIES)
- birthdays (see ANNIVERSARIES)
- business: good business year, new store, new account, new contract, merger, opening own business, securing a franchise
- changes: new car/home/job
- customers: good news, major life events
- election to office: public/organization or club/professional society/social group
- employees’ work
- engagement (see WEDDINGS)
- graduation
- jobs: new job, promotion, new title
- loan payment (see CREDIT)
- religious milestones: christening/circumcision/bar mitzvah/bat mitzvah/ first communion/confirmation/ordination/taking of religious vows
- retirement
- sales messages: being selected to receive special offer/credit limit raised (see SALES)

- wedding (see WEDDINGS)

### How to Say It

- Use the word “congratulations” early in your note.
- Mention the reason (graduation, promotion, honor, baby).
- Tell how happy, pleased, proud, or impressed you are—and why. “The art of pleasing consists in being pleased.” (William Hazlitt)
- If appropriate, tell how you learned about the good news. If you read it in the newspaper, enclose the clipping or a photocopy of it.
- Relate an anecdote, shared memory, or reflection that has some bearing on the occasion.
- In closing, wish the person continued success and happiness; express your confidence in a bright future; assure them of your affection, love, admiration, warmth, interest, delight, pleasure, or continued business support.

### What Not to Say

- Don’t indulge in excessive flattery (“watch out, Corporate America—here she comes,” “I can see that I’ll soon be writing to congratulate you on the Nobel Prize”). It makes people uncomfortable. A simple “Congratulations!” and a few personal remarks bring quite enough joy.
- Don’t make your congratulatory note do double duty: don’t include questions, information, sales messages, or work matters that aren’t relevant to the good news.
- Don’t compare the recipient’s news to something you once did or to something you read in the paper; let the person enjoy a moment in the sun—alone.
- Don’t talk about “luck” when congratulating someone; it implies that chance rather than talent and hard work was responsible for the success.
- Beware of inadvertently putting a negative spin on your congratulations. Instead of “I never would have thought you could do it” or “After all this time, you finally did it,” say “I’m so impressed with your energy and determination” or “Congratulations on your hard work and perseverance.”

### Tips on Writing

- Written congratulations are optional except when you have received an announcement of personal news (a graduation, for example).

- Write soon after hearing the news. Congratulations are best served up warm. If you're late, apologize only briefly.
- Even when you're close to the person to whom you're writing, make your congratulatory letter brief and somewhat formal; this increases its impact.

## Special Situations

- Sending notes of congratulations to customers, clients, colleagues, and other business associates about their good news (births, weddings, promotions, new business) is a thoughtful goodwill gesture.
- When a branch office, department, or division has enjoyed a collective success, write to them as a group, naming each employee ("Congratulations on surpassing this year's collection goal/securing the new account/your speedy inventory reduction/a new sales volume record/a smooth departmental reorganization").
- Your response to news of an engagement is pleasant and congratulatory. If you have reservations about the relationship, deal with them in person or don't write at all; cautionary or qualified congratulations are worse than none. Traditionally "congratulations" were offered to the engaged man and "best wishes" to the engaged woman; you may properly use either expression for women or men.
- The news of a divorce can elicit a simple acknowledgment, a letter of sympathy, or a letter of congratulations. The latter is sent rarely, and then only to someone you know well. You might, however, want to congratulate someone not on the divorce itself but on surviving the upheaval of a difficult period.
- Baby announcements inspire some of the happiest congratulations. When the baby is premature, send congratulations, gifts, and good wishes in the normal way; do not wait to see how the baby does. In the event of multiple births, don't ask if the woman took fertility pills and don't say or imply, "You poor things!" Just say "Congratulations!" When a child is born with medical problems or a disability, write that you've heard they have a new little one, that you are thinking of them. Avoid commercial "new baby" cards and conventional congratulations on the one hand, and expressions of sympathy on the other. Some of the unfortunate remarks that these new parents hear include: "You're not going to keep it, are you?" "I think you should sue the hospital." "Is one of you a carrier for this?" "Maybe the baby won't live; that would be best all around." "Whose fault was it?" "Did you drink while you were pregnant?" "I guess it could have been worse." "God only sends burdens to those who can bear them." Until you know how the parents are feeling (devastated, concerned but optimistic, happy to have the child at any price), don't reveal your feelings—they may be wide of the mark. Later, when you know how the parents are feeling,



you can respond on a more emotional level. When congratulating someone on an adoption, do not write, “I’ll bet you get pregnant now.” People adopt for reasons other than fertility and adoption is not, in any case, a cure for infertility (pregnancies occur after adoption at approximately the same rates as they occur in couples dealing with problems of infertility). Don’t ask about the child’s background or biological/birth parents (never write “real parents”; you are writing to the real parents). Don’t say that you “admire” your friends for adopting anymore than you would “admire” a biological parent for having a child. What *do* you write? Ask the parents to tell you about the child and the great arrival day. Say that you can’t wait to come visit, and wish them much happiness.

- Sometimes a “congratulations” approach is used in sales letters (see SALES).

## Format

- Most congratulations take the form of a note—on personal stationery, foldovers, or notecards.

- Commercial cards are available for almost every occasion that calls for congratulations. However, use the inside or back of the card to add your own message.

- In some contexts (business, politics, clubs and organizations), congratulations may be sent on business letterhead, business-personal paper, or memo stationery, depending on the degree of closeness between sender and recipient and the importance of the good news.

- Some congratulations may be e-mailed, particularly in office settings among colleagues.

## WORDS

accomplish- ment	excellent	leadership	success
achievement	exceptional	legendary	superb
admire	exciting	meaningful	superior
applaud	extraordinary	memorable	superlative
appreciate	feat	milestone	talent
asset	finest	momentous	thrilled
brilliant	foresight	occasion	tradition
celebration	future	outstanding	tremendous
cheer	generous	peerless	tribute

commend	genius	performance	triumph
compliment	gift	perseverance	unforgettable
congratulate	gratifying	pleasure	unique
contribution	happy	progress	unparalleled
creative	hero	prolific	unrivaled
dazzling	honor	proud	valuable
début	imaginative	recognize	victory
dedicated	impressed	resourceful	vision
delighted	incomparable	respected	vital
dependable	innovative	salute	well-deserved
distinguished	inspiring	satisfying	winner
effort	invaluable	sensational	
enterprising	inventive	skillful	
esteem	kudos	special	

## PHRASES

accept my heartiest congratulations on	many congratulations and much happiness
achieved your goals	offer my warmest/sincerest/heartiest
	est
all possible joy and happiness	congratulations
an impressive record/achievement	red letter day
another success	rejoice with you
beyond all expectations	sharing in your happiness
cheerful/cheering news	significant/valuable contribution
continued health and happiness/success	sincere wishes for continued success
couldn't let this happy occasion go by without	spectacular achievement
delighted/happy/thrilled to hear/read/receive the news	take great pleasure in sending congratulations to you
good/great/sensational/joyful/thrilling news	take this opportunity to wish you every happiness
high quality of your work	were thrilled to hear about wishing you all the best/much success/continued success

<p>I especially liked the way you impressed with this latest award/ honor/prize/achievement in awe of all that you've done joins me in sending best/good/ warm wishes know that you're held in high es- teem</p>	<p>with all good wishes to you in your new venture wonderful ability to get things done—and done well your important contribution you've done a superb job of</p>
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## SENTENCES

Baxter called this evening to tell us that the two of you are engaged to be married, and we wanted to tell you immediately how happy we are for you.

Best wishes from all of us.

Congratulations on opening your own chiropractic office!

Congratulations on the littlest Woodley—may she know health, happiness, and love all her life.

Good news travels fast!

Hear hear!

I am almost as delighted as you are with this recent turn of events.

I couldn't be happier if it had happened to me.

I hear wonderful things about you.

I hope we will enjoy many more years of doing business together.

I just heard the news—congratulations!

I'm proud to know you/to be your friend!

I'm so impressed!

It was a splendid performance/great triumph/brilliant speech.

I understand that congratulations are in order.

I've just heard from Choi Nam-Sun that two of your poems will be included in the next issue—congratulations!

I very much admire your organizational skills/perseverance/many achievements/ingenuity/calm in the face of difficulties.

I wanted you to know how proud and happy I was to hear that your short will be shown at the Brooklyn Film Festival.

I wish I could be with you to share in this happy occasion.

My hat's off to you!

My heartiest congratulations to you both.

My thoughts are with you today as you celebrate.

My warmest congratulations on your graduation from Columbia!

This is the best news I've heard in a long time.

We are pleased with your work on ethics-in-government legislation.

Well done!

We've all benefited from your expertise and creativity.

What terrific news!

With best wishes for fair weather and smooth sailing in the years ahead.

You certainly haven't let the grass grow under your feet.

Your reputation had preceded you, and I see you intend to live up to it.

You've done it again!

You've topped everyone in the store in sales this past month—congratulations!

## PARAGRAPHS

I was delighted (although not surprised) to hear that you won the Schubert piano concerto competition this year. Congratulations! I've watched you develop as a fine pianist over the years, and it is a thrill to see you rewarded for your talent—and, above all, for your hard work.

Please accept the congratulations of everyone here at Avonia-Bunn Title Insurance Company on your Outstanding Service Award. Your industry, your attention to detail, and your creative problem-solving have been an inspiration to all of us.

You remind me of something I read long ago, written by Elinor Smith: "It had long since come to my attention that people of accomplishment rarely sat back and let things happen to them. They went out and happened to things."

I well remember your diffident debut twenty-five years ago. Who would have guessed that your "awkward little offspring" would grow to be the successful business it is today?

In the past ten years, the company has grown beyond all recognition—a complete line of new products, computerization of all departments, financial growth beyond our wildest expectations—and wherever there has been innovation, development, progress, you've been in the front ranks. We wouldn't be the company we are today without you. Please accept the enclosed bonus as a sign of our gratitude and appreciation for ten wonderful years.

Aunt Evalina told us about your "dramatic" success. Congratulations on what was evidently a stunning performance! I'm so proud of you,

not only for this latest accomplishment, but for all your hard work of the past four years.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Professor Arronax,

Heartiest congratulations on the recently published accounts of your discoveries. I have read them with the greatest fervor and admiration.

With all best wishes, I am

Faithfully yours,

Dear Briggs,

I was happy to hear about your promotion to division credit manager. Let's celebrate!

Your cousin,

Dear Raoul,

Congratulations on being named this year's Outstanding Manager. Having recently visited one of your division branches, I know that you very much deserve this honor.

I'm looking forward to seeing you at the May banquet when you accept your plaque. Until then, best wishes.

Sincerely,

Dear Governor Peck,

Congratulations on your landslide election. All of us who campaigned for you in this area are proud and pleased to have been part of your victory.

Please accept my best wishes for a distinguished, productive, and happy term of office.

Respectfully yours,

Dear Mr. Dodsworth:

Congratulations on the opening of your newest branch of the Revelation Motor Company. We have always appreciated doing business with you, and expect to enjoy it even more now that your new office is only two blocks from us.

Best wishes for happiness and success to all of you at Revelation.

Sincerely,

Dear Synövé,

Congratulations on receiving the Granliden award! That's terrific. I was so happy for you when I saw the announcement in the paper. I hope everything else in your life is going as well.

Best,

Dear William,

I've just heard from Katherine that you are finally a full-fledged chemical engineer—congratulations! I've admired you as I've watched your struggles these past few years to acquire an education. Katherine and I said some rather flattering things about you and concluded that you're going to go far in this world.

My best wishes to you for a bright and happy future.

Fondly,

Dear Mr. Rochester,

Congratulations on your election to the Thornfield School Board. I hope that after running such a vigorous and inspiring campaign you still have enough energy to carry out some of your sound and needed ideas.

Be assured of our continued support, and do not hesitate to call on us if we can do anything to help.

With best wishes,

Dear Ms. Hubbard,

Congratulations on an outstanding first year at Grattan Public Relations, Inc. A growing company like ours needs and appreciates people with your energy, expertise, and intuition. We are all predicting a brilliant future for you.

Congratulations and best wishes.

Sincerely,

Dear Helen and Arthur,

So little Laura has arrived at last. It has been such a long process, and I know it's been hard for you wondering if there would ever be an end to the red tape and waiting. But all that's over now, and the three of you can begin your life together.

From what I hear, this is definitely an adoption made in heaven. I know that Laura will add a great deal to the joy you two already find in each other.

With every good wish,

See also: APPRECIATION, EMPLOYMENT, FAMILY, GOODWILL, RESPONSES, SALES, WEDDINGS.

# Letters That Serve As Contracts

*The degree of miscommunication regarding what's been agreed upon in a business deal tends to increase in direct proportion to the amount of money involved.*

—ROBERT J. RINGER

A letter can serve as a short, informal contract. Whether you need an attorney to check such letters depends on the complexity of the contract and the possible negative outcomes if it is poorly written.

## Contract Letters Deal with

- agreements
- cancellations of agreements/contracts
- changes in terms
- leases
- rentals
- work orders

## How to Say It

- Identify the nature of the contract in a subject line (“Re: Tuckpointing at 1711 Grismer Avenue”).
- Begin with a phrase such as “This letter will serve as a contract between...”
- Give names and addresses of both parties to the agreement or contract.
- State what each party will give and receive.
- Specify dates by which the work must be completed and by which payment must be received.
- Mention whether and under what conditions the contract may be canceled.
- Specify date by which you expect the letter to be signed and returned.
- Leave lines and blank spaces at the bottom for both parties to sign and date the letter.

## What Not to Say

- Don't include anything that doesn't bear on the contract; this is a focused document.
- Don't use legal-sounding terminology to make a contract look more legal (unless you are a lawyer). Use simple, standard English to avoid later charges that the other party "didn't understand" part of the contract.

## Tips on Writing

- Before writing, list all factors that will protect your agreement (for example, time limits, price ceilings, independent inspector). Have someone familiar with the situation double-check it for you.
  - Don't be afraid to write as though you were speaking. Use personal pronouns and ordinary grammar and sentence structure ("I promise to...in exchange for..."). On the other hand, maintain a businesslike tone to inspire confidence and to strengthen the letter's use as a contract.
  - The main body of the contract can be as short as a paragraph or long enough to be divided into many paragraphs. In the latter case, organize the information into clear, logical units.

## Special Situations

- If timing is important to your agreement, contract, or the cancellation of either, send your letter return receipt requested so that you can verify the date that the letter was received. If your lease requires you to give thirty days' notice, you will be glad to have a receipt stating that the notice was received within the time limit.
  - When submitting a proposal that you expect to be accepted, turn it into a contract or binding agreement by adding at the bottom, "Approved by [signature] on [date] by [printed name and title]."
  - When lending money to family or friends, all parties will benefit from having a letter contract spelling out amounts, dates, and responsibilities.

## Format

- All contracts and letters dealing with contracts are typed on business letterhead, personal letterhead stationery, or good bond stationery.



- Forms are used when your business habitually contracts for the same kind of work.

## WORDS

agreement	conditions	negotiation	transaction
arrangement	confirm	obligations	understanding
assure	conform	provisions	underwrite
bind	consent	settlement	verify
certify	endorse	stipulation	warrant
clauses	guarantee	terms	

## PHRASES

agreed-to terms	mutual satisfaction
articles of the agreement	on condition that
as of the agreed-upon date	please sign and date
comply with	reach an understanding
considered complete when	return this letter by
effective as of/until	terms listed below
in return, you agree to	

## SENTENCES

Enclosed is a check for \$500, which will serve as earnest money for apartment # 37 in the 131 Park Drive building.

In the event of disagreement about the quality of the work, the dispute will be submitted to independent arbitration with costs being shared equally by both parties.

Note: This contract may be withdrawn by us if not accepted within 10 days.

Paragraph N of the contract is irrelevant to the matter at hand; please delete it and initial and return this letter.

The enclosed forward currency contract constitutes an agreement to deliver or receive a present stated amount of currency at a future specified date.

This letter serves as a contract between Madge Allen and Cain & Sons for sheetrock and plaster repair to the property at 35 James Court, with the following conditions and specifications.

This letter will serve as an informal agreement between us covering the

period from January 1, 2002, to December 31, 2003, for the following services.

## PARAGRAPHS

I am happy to lend you the money to buy the truck. As we discussed, you will repay the \$9,000 loan over a period of 36 months in the amount of \$250 per month. There will be no interest. Please sign and date the second copy of this letter and return it to me.

I agree to translate your Moroccan contracts, letters, faxes, and other messages for the fee of \$35 per hour. I further agree to complete the outstanding translations by February 10. You will pay messenger service fees between your office and mine, parking fees for consultations at your offices, and postage for mail or overnighting services.

Acceptance of contract: The above prices, specifications, and conditions are satisfactory and are hereby accepted. You are authorized to do the work as specified. Payment will be made upon completion. Date of acceptance: May 6, 2004. Authorized signature: Bernard Boweri

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Mr. Bowling,

As required by our lease, we hereby give you thirty days' notice of our intention to move from Apartment 2 at 619 Fourth Street.

Please call any evening after 6:00 p.m. to let us know when you need to show the apartment.

Our rent deposit of \$450 will need to be refunded to us as we have not damaged the apartment in any way during our tenancy.

We have enjoyed our two years here very much, and will be sorry to move.

Sincerely yours,

Dear Ms. Hart:

Pryke Financial Services, Inc. will be happy to act as Investment Adviser to the Collins Foundation and, as such, will assist with cash management and investment of foundation funds with the exception of the initial investment of the bond issue proceeds from certain bond issues.

We agree to provide the following services:

1. A complete review and analysis of the Collins Foundation's financial structure and conditions.
2. The preparation of written investment objectives outlining preferable investments, portfolio goals, risk limits, and diversification possibilities.

3. The establishment of preferred depository or certificate arrangements with banks or savings and loans.
4. Soliciting bids for guaranteed investment agreements.
5. Monitoring fund transfers, verifying receipt of collateral, completing documentation.
6. Working with a governmental securities dealer to execute governmental security transactions.
7. Meeting with your treasurer and financial adviser periodically and with your board of directors as requested.
8. Providing monthly portfolio status reports with sufficient detail for accounting and recording purposes.

Pryke Financial Services, Inc. will submit quarterly statements for services. Our fees will be billed in advance and calculated by multiplying .000375 times the Collins Foundation's invested portfolio at the beginning of each calendar quarter (.0015 annually). Fees will be adjusted at the end of each quarter to reflect the rate times the average invested balance for the previous quarter. Adjustments will be included in the next billing.

Fees can be reviewed and adjusted annually on the anniversary date of this contract.

This agreement will run from June 1, 2004, through June 1, 2005, but may be canceled by either party without cause with thirty days' written notice.

Sincerely,  
Grace Bloom  
President

The above agreement is accepted by the Collins Foundation (blanks for date, signatures, titles).

Dear Mr. Golspie,

This letter will serve as an informal agreement between us. On Feb. 7 from 4:00–5:00 p.m. you agree to provide entertainers for my daughter's birthday party consisting of one clown, one magician, and one facepainter. I understand that the clown and magician portion of the entertainment will last about 20 minutes, and the facepainter will remain for the rest of the hour.

I agree to pay you a \$50 deposit (check enclosed) and the remaining \$200 on Feb. 7. As requested a room will be available for your use. Also enclosed is a detailed map with directions to our home.

We're all looking forward to this, adults as well as children!

See also: ACCEPTANCES, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, ADJUSTMENTS, ORDERS.

# Cover Letters

*It is estimated that the average piece of business correspondence gets less than thirty seconds of the reader's attention. Even a truly great cover letter will not get much more.*

—MARTIN YATE

Cover letters (also called transmittal letters) accompany résumés, application forms, manuscripts, documents, product literature, payments, charitable contributions, contracts, reports, samples, data, and other materials.

They may be as short as two sentences, telling what is enclosed and why, or as long as two pages, highlighting important points in the enclosures, explaining something that is not immediately obvious, or developing a sales message to accompany the report, sample, document, information, or package.

The main purpose of the cover letter is to direct the reader quickly and persuasively to the enclosed materials.

Distinct from a cover letter, the cover sheet accompanies a fax and lists the person sending the fax, the person receiving it, the fax number, and the number of pages being faxed (see FAXES).

## Cover Letters Accompany

- application forms
- brochures/booklets/catalogs/pamphlets (see SALES)
- checks unaccompanied by statements or invoices
- contracts/agreements
- contributions to charitable causes
- documents
- faxes (see FAXES)
- information/instructions
- manuscripts
- product literature (see SALES)
- proposals
- questionnaires
- résumés
- samples (see SALES)
- surveys

## How to Say It

- Address your letter to a specific person.
- State what is enclosed, attached, or mailed under separate cover. If there are several items, list them. Give number and type of items (“three brochures”), amount of payment, or other descriptive information.
- Mention why you’re sending the material (in response to a request, to introduce the person to a new product, for their information).
- If necessary, explain what the item is and how to interpret or use it.
- Summarize the main points of the enclosure, highlight strong qualifications on your résumé, or otherwise orient the reader toward the most important issues of your material.
- Tell what response you’re expecting from the other person or what future action you’ll be taking.
- Include your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and fax number.
- Close with an expression of appreciation or a forward-looking statement.

## What Not to Say

- Don’t duplicate the enclosed material. Summarizing a document or mentioning the salient points of a contract is helpful, but repeating sentences and paragraphs may lead the reader to skip over those parts later.
- Don’t close on a weak note. Words like “hope,” “wish,” “if,” “should,” “could,” and “might” signal a lack of confidence (“If you wish, I could come for an interview at your convenience”; “Call me if you’re interested”).
- Don’t try to attract attention with “cute” stationery, humor, multiple question marks or exclamation marks, smiley faces, or other gimmicks. You want to personalize your letter and make it stand out, but there’s a fine line between an enthusiastic, confident letter and one that makes the reader wince. If you’re in any doubt as to which your letter is, ask someone to evaluate it for you.

## Tips on Writing

- Cover letters aren’t needed for routine orders, payments, shipments, recommendations, references, or when the recipient has requested or is expecting your enclosure. Include a cover letter when the materials are not expected, do not speak clearly for themselves, or benefit from an accompanying persuasive message.

- Double-check names, titles, and addresses for accuracy; this is crucial when applying for a position or sending a manuscript to an editor.

- Be brief. Shakespeare's advice was to use "few words, but to effect." Except when the cover letter is a sales letter accompanying samples, product literature, or catalogs, it is only a side dish, not the main course. A good cover letter is usually not more than one page long (five or six paragraphs) and it will make the reader want to set it aside quickly in order to get to the enclosure.

- Cover letters are exquisitely clean and attractive, with generous margins and no spelling, grammar, or usage errors. "The old aphorisms are basically sound. First impressions are lasting." (Jessie Fauset)

- In *Cover Letters That Will Get You the Job You Want* (Better Way Books, 1993) Stanley Wynnnett says, "The last two words of every cover letter I have ever written are *thank you*." Some authorities think that it is presumptuous to say thank you in advance, that it is trite, and that it signals the end of an exchange rather than an intermediate step. However, few people object to being thanked, so use your own judgment.

- For more assistance with cover letters, see the excellent *Cover Letters That Knock 'Em Dead* by Martin Yate, 3rd ed. (Adams Media Corporation, 1998) and *Cover Letters* by Taunee Besson, 2nd ed. (John Wiley & Sons, 1996). For cover letters that accompany résumés, see *The Perfect Cover Letter* by Richard H. Beatty, 2nd ed. (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997) and for cover letters that accompany manuscript submissions, see *How to Write Attention-Grabbing Query & Cover Letters* by John Wood (Writer's Digest Books, 1996).

## Special Situations

- A well-written cover letter for your résumé is a powerful selling instrument. "Very seldom will you write a letter more important to you than that accompanying a résumé." (Margaret McCarthy) Open by mentioning the person who referred you, the ad you're responding to, or something complimentary about the company you're applying to (and the more specific you are about what you like about the company the more effective it is). Identify the position or kind of work you're applying for. Emphasize how your qualifications match those the company is seeking (but don't repeat phrases or dates or specific material from the résumé). Don't focus on what you want, but generate interest in you by telling how you can contribute to the company. Don't write more than a page; you may want to include everything, but a long cover letter is offputting to a busy person and your résumé may not get read at all. Don't send a one-size-fits-all cover letter. Tailor each letter to a specific company; recipients often look to see if

there is anything related to their company; few are impressed by mass-produced letters. Close by requesting an interview, which is the purpose of your cover letter and résumé: “I will call you next week to arrange an interview appointment after you have had a chance to review my résumé”; “I look forward to meeting with you to discuss the match between your requirements and my qualifications.” See APPLICATIONS for additional ideas for writing the cover letter.

- The cover letter you send to an editor with a manuscript is brief. Its main purpose is to introduce your submission (type of book or article, title, word count) and yourself (past publishing credits or credentials for writing the material). A good cover letter includes a tightly written paragraph that reads like catalog copy. Your best writing skills are used to describe or give the flavor of your book or article. Always (that’s “always”) include a SASE and close with a courtesy.

- The cover letter that accompanies a report identifies the report by title; mentions why it was prepared, who authorized it, and who wrote it; provides a summary (based on the report’s introduction, abstract, or summary). If the report is formal, the transmittal letter is placed after the title page and before the table of contents.

- A note that accompanies a gift has a purpose similar to that of a cover letter. Identify the enclosure (“a little something for your birthday”) and include your greetings and best wishes. To accompany a corporate gift, mention the occasion for the gift, if there is one (service anniversary, completion of a major project). Be specific about the person’s work, talent, anniversary, or award: “I’m particularly grateful because...” or “You’ve been a delight to work with because...” or “Your work has meant a lot to the company because...” Relate an anecdote, a shared memory, or reflection that bolsters your good wishes. End your note with pleasant wishes for continued success or with some forward-looking remark about your future work association. The same type of note is written when the gift is being sent to the person from the shipper or from an Internet company, except that the writer mentions sending “a little something” or “something I thought you’d like” or “something for your desk” and, when possible, estimates when it will arrive. The impact of a corporate gift is magnified one-hundredfold when it is accompanied by a handwritten note of appreciation. Employees who receive such a note from a busy executive feel valued in a personal, memorable way.

- A cover letter accompanying a sample or product literature is more properly considered a sales letter (see SALES).

## Format

- Except for notes accompanying gifts or the most informal transmittals, cover letters are typed on business letterhead or on memo

paper (for in-house materials or for those outside people and firms with which you have a high-volume and casual correspondence).

- When asked to fax or e-mail a *résumé*, you will also be faxing or e-mailing your cover letter. In the case of a fax, write it as you would a regular letter on letterhead stationery and use the “fine resolution” setting to ensure that it is as attractive and readable as possible when it arrives.

- Use form cover letters to accompany requested information. To give them a more personal appearance, use good quality paper, address the person by name (instead of “Dear Friend” or “Dear Subscriber”), and sign each letter individually. For potentially important customers, write a personal cover letter.

## WORDS

announce	enclosed	policy	provisions
attached	illustrate	project	report
deliver	notice	proposal	summarize
document	outline	prospectus	terms
draft			

## PHRASES

acquaint you with	for further information
as promised	here are/is
at your request	I am sending you
brochure that presents/details/ describes/outlines/explains	if you need/want additional information
call with questions	I’m also enclosing
complimentary copy	in response to your advertisement
direct your attention to	please note that
enclosed is/are	rough draft

## SENTENCES

After you have reviewed the enclosed proposal, please call me (or Bess Beynon if I’m out of town) to discuss it.

As a June graduate of Cleveland College with a BA in business, I am looking for employment and wanted to check first with you because I so enjoyed



working for The Clement Group as an intern in your marketing department.

As you will see from my résumé, I have a great deal of experience in program development, administration, contract development, and budget planning.

At your request, I am enclosing three copies of the Empire State Film Festival program.

Complete medical records from the office of Dr. Anna Lakington for Mr. Barnabas Holly are enclosed.

Enclosed are copies of the recorded deeds and easements for the above-referenced properties.

Enclosed is a completed application form—please note my four years' experience as an installation technician.

Enclosed is a copy of the survey on equipment rental in the six-county metro area.

Enclosed is a quitclaim deed conveying the new Fort Road from Faulkland County to the City of Sheridan.

Enclosed is the requested report on the Heat Treatment Seminar, held July 14–17.

Here are the molding samples we'd like you to evaluate.

I am enclosing the damaged belt from my twenty-year-old Bannister vacuum in the hopes that you can locate a replacement for it.

I am interested in your part-time position for a truck unloader.

I am responding to your advertisement in Sunday's paper for a senior analyst programmer.

I am writing to introduce myself and inquire about openings for a Tae Kwon Do instructor.

I believe I am well qualified to apply for your opening for a water quality extension agent.

I'm sending you a copy of the article on the Minnesota twins study that we discussed last week.

In response to your ad for a website producer/editor, I'm enclosing my résumé, which details my considerable experience in this area.

I understand you are looking for a form tool grinder.

I will telephone your assistant Monday morning to see if you can schedule an interview next week to discuss the position.

I would like to bring my commercial interior design skills to work for Engfred Offices, Inc.

Ms. DeGroot suggested I contact you about the development grant writer and board liaison position.

Please sign both copies of the enclosed letter of agreement and return them to us.

Prentice Page suggested I write you about the wallpapering specialist position.

Thank you for your patience—enclosed please find the replacement part for your Noyes Intercommunication System.

Under separate cover I'm sending you samples of our new line of Natural Solution products for the hair.

We are pleased to send you the set of deck plans you requested.

Will you please look over the enclosed rough draft of your will and let me know if it needs any changes or corrections?

## PARAGRAPHS

I note that you are seeking a warehouse manager with five years of supervisory or managing experience and five years of experience in shipping, receiving, and inventory control. This almost precisely describes my qualifications.

Enclosed is a sample (ref. #4467-AB) of the film that Alwyn Tower and I discussed with you last Thursday. Please keep in mind that the sample was produced under laboratory conditions. If you have any questions about this material or variations of it, please call Alwyn or me.

Enclosed is an Agreement and Release between you and Lakely Associates, which gives the terms of the settlement for the redevelopment of your well. When you sign the Agreement and present written proof of the adjudication of the well to Lakely Associates, we will send you a check for the agreed-upon amount.

Our check for \$15,223.92 is enclosed and constitutes full payment for all items listed on Invoice # 68-331982. Thank you for your help in getting the airconditioners to us so quickly.

Today I am shipping approximately one square foot each of 0.090 to 0.100 inch thick sheets of Fe-3% Si (hot-rolled) and IF (niobium-containing interstitial-free; hot-rolled, one sheet, cold-rolled, one sheet). The rolling direction is marked on each sheet.

I am currently employed in an engineering environment by a large independent transportation firm, but I am interested in making a career change into the investment/financial services field. I have recently obtained my CFP designation and hope to find a position as a broker trainee. I am enclosing my résumé for your review and consideration for such a position.

Enclosed is the complete report on the foreign language survey conducted last fall. Vice-presidents and personnel directors of one hundred of the nation's largest corporations were asked which foreign language

would be most important for a successful business career during the next twenty years. The results may surprise you!

Thank you for your interest in Griffiths Collar and Shirt Company. I'm enclosing a packet of materials that will describe our range of products and services. I will call you next week to see if you have any questions and to discuss how we might be of help to you. You are, of course, always welcome to visit our offices and factory here in Lycurgus.

You've been buying Ponderevo's Cough Lintus and our line of Mogg's soap for years. Now we proudly announce a new product that is sure to become a household word: Tono-Bungay! Enclosed are several samples. Try Tono-Bungay yourself and share some with friends. Our Order Line is available to you 24 hours a day, and orders are shipped within 48 hours.

The attached set of project plans covers work through the end of 2004. The plans have been generated in consultation with each of the key people involved. We expect to review progress the first of each month and to adjust the work accordingly. You will note that we are dependent on the work of others in the office and that they are in turn dependent on us. Please review the scheduled work and give me your comments.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear G.E. Challenger,

I was intrigued with the ad in Sunday's paper seeking someone experienced with high pressure liquid chromatography—first, because there aren't that many openings in this field and, second, because my experience and background match almost precisely what you appear to need.

I was further intrigued when I called the number given in the ad and discovered that this is your company. I have never forgotten several of your research papers that were required reading when I was in college.

After you have a chance to read my résumé, I hope you will agree that an interview might be interesting for us both.

Dear Kurt,

Enclosed is a copy of the letter of recommendation I wrote for you. I've sent the original on to the academic dean in the envelope you provided. I thought you might like a copy for your files.

I am so pleased you asked me to do this. I just hope I was of some small help. Let me know as soon as you hear the good news!

With best wishes,

Dear Dr. Cheesewright,

Your office manager, Ms. Sherriff, mentioned to me that you might

soon have an opening for a dental hygienist. She suggested I send you my résumé.

You may not remember, but I was a patient of yours when I was growing up here, and even as a youngster I thought it would be “fun” to work in your office! I’ve been living in Chicago for the past ten years, but am planning to move back here because of my father’s health.

After you’ve had a chance to look at my résumé, you can reach me at 555-1234 to schedule an interview.

Dear Maria,

I received the film sample (#18-1 A) from Julian Silvercross and am impressed. We are excited about the performance improvement that we think this technology may offer us. As Nancy Sibley explained to you on the phone, we are interested in using it for our silicon detector assembly, which is an integral part of sensors used for various industrial purposes.

I’m enclosing three of these detector assemblies for your review. Feel free to dissect them to locate the detector assemblies.

We ask that you respect the confidentiality of our product and interest in your film. Please give me a call after you have had a chance to look at the sensors.

Yours truly,

Dear Mr. Oakley:

Enclosed is your copy of the contract between Sullivan Press and Eaglesham Publications. Several of the clauses are being revised, and I will see that you receive the amended version as soon as it is ready.

If you have any questions about your obligations under the contract, please check with our attorney, Mary Jane Reed, in the Legal Services Department.

Sincerely yours,

See also: APPLICATIONS, QUERIES, RESUMES, SALES.

# Letters About Credit

*The world is a puzzling place today. All these banks sending us credit cards....  
Imagine a bank sending credit cards to two ladies over a hundred years old!  
What are those folks thinking?*

—SARAH AND A. ELIZABETH DELANY

Much of the paperwork involved in obtaining and granting credit has been standardized and codified into forms reflecting federal, state, or institutional rules and guidelines. However, nonroutine matters require carefully written letters.

## Letters About Credit Include

- approving loans
- canceling an account
- collecting past-due accounts (see COLLECTION)
- congratulations: fine record/payment (see also SALES)
- credit bureaus: letters to and from
- delinquent account
- denying/refusing credit or loan applications (see REFUSALS)
- errors in credit history
- explaining credit/loan refusals/conditions
- extending payment deadlines
- family members and friends: lending/borrowing
- inviting new accounts/reviving inactive accounts
- obtaining one's own credit history
- requesting credit/bankcard/loan

## How to Say It

- When asking a credit bureau for a copy of your credit report: give name, address, social security number, and telephone number. Use letterhead stationery or enclose a business card to substantiate that you are the subject of the check. When requesting a credit report on another person: supply the person's name, address, and social secur-

- ity number; give a reason for asking (you are renting property to the person, selling them a car, co-signing a contract for deed with them).
- When writing an individual or a business to ask for a credit reference, give the name and address of the person under consideration, request any pertinent credit information, explain briefly why you want it (“we are discussing a partnership”), state that you will treat the information confidentially, express your appreciation for the information, and enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope for their reply. In some cases, mention how you were referred to them (for example, by the person under consideration). Ask specific questions: How long have you known the person? In what capacity? What kinds of credit have you extended? What is the current balance? The person’s payment pattern? How long have they been employed there? What is their income?
  - When requesting correction of an inaccurate credit record, identify yourself by full name and address, state the incorrect portions of the record, and explain why they are incorrect. Include copies of documents (statements, loan papers, tax returns, paycheck stubs) substantiating your position. Ask that a corrected copy of the report be sent to you. Thank the person; they most likely were not responsible for the errors and can, in fact, be helpful to you.
  - When denying credit or a loan: thank the person for their interest; express regret that you are unable to extend credit; assure them that you considered their request thoroughly; suggest an alternate course of action (layaway, paying cash, smaller loan) that will allow a continued relationship; encourage them to re-apply later. If questioned further, list your credit criteria, mentioning the problems presented by the person’s credit background, and telling what sources you used to determine creditworthiness. For smaller, more routine credit requests, use forms stating simply, “Your request for a loan has been denied,” followed by a check-off list of possible reasons: length of employment, lack of information, excessive credit obligations, newcomer to the area with no credit record, poor payment record, garnishment. Leave a blank to fill in the name of the credit bureau where you obtained your information.
  - When approving a loan application or granting credit, state that you’ve approved the request, indicate the amount approved and the effective date, and explain credit or loan payoff procedures. Enclose forms needing signatures along with instructions on how to complete them. Welcome new customers to your lending institution or business, express appreciation for their business, and suggest they bring all their credit needs to you.

## What Not to Say

- Don't write anything that cannot be documented. Phrases like "misses payments" or "habitually late with payments" must be substantiated by records of such payment patterns.

## Tips on Writing

- Credit matters are confidential. Take every precaution to safeguard the credit information you give or receive.
- Accuracy is essential when providing information on someone's credit history. Double-check your facts as well as spellings of names and account numbers.
- Be tactful. Even people with poor credit histories want to hear good of themselves and often feel they are doing a decent job given their circumstances. In her 1923 book, Mary Owens Crowther writes, "Tactless credit handling is the most effective way known to dissipate good-will."

## Special Situations

- Loans between family members or friends often come with hidden financial and personal costs. When requesting a loan, be businesslike and factual: tell how much you need and why; suggest a repayment plan and the amount of interest you will pay. Always offer the other person a face-saving "out" ("You may have financial problems of your own, for all I know," "This may not be a good time for you," or "You may disapprove, on principle, of loans between friends"). Reassure them that there is no reason to feel guilty or uncomfortable about turning you down. Do not beg or play on their sympathies; pressuring a person who is not willing to lend you money won't get you the money—and it will lose you a friend. When refusing a request for a personal loan, be brief: "I wish I could help you, but it's not possible just now." Don't overexplain or apologize or hedge. If you like, close by asking if there is some other way you could help. When granting a request for a loan from a friend or family member, put it in writing: state the loan amount, the terms and dates of repayment, the interest, and any other information. Send two copies of your letter and ask that the person sign and date one and return it to you. To remind a friend or family member of an overdue loan, be gentle at first: "I know how busy you are..."; "I wonder if you forgot about..."; "Am I mistaken, or did we agree that you'd repay the loan September 1?" If you write a second time, include a photocopy of your original agreement letter and word your expectation of getting your money back more strongly.

- If you can't make a loan or installment credit payment on time, write the company at once. Apologize for being overdue, tell them you intend to pay as soon as possible, and enclose whatever portion of the balance you can. If you have a good reason for being overdue (illness, layoff), mention it. Otherwise, don't go into lengthy excuses; your creditor is more interested in knowing that you are taking responsibility for the account.

## Format

- There are virtually no handwritten letters dealing with credit matters. Routine correspondence may be handled with form letters. Others will be typed on business letterhead.

## WORDS

application	default	lessor	reimburse
approval	finance	lien	repay
arrangement	funds	loan	requirements
balance	guarantee	mortgage	verify
collateral	installment	nonpayment	
creditworthy	IOU	receipt	
debt	lender	regretfully	

## PHRASES

after careful consideration	late payments
although you have only occasional payment problems	must delay payment
apply for credit privileges	one of our credit requirements is
as much as we would like to extend credit to you	pattern of late payments
cannot justify approval	pay in advance/in full
cash basis only	pleased to be able to accommodate you
consistently on-time credit payments	poor payment history
credit application/history/record/standing/rating/limit	preferred customer
	regret that we are unable to
	responsible use of credit



current/up-to-date financial  
statement

due to a rise in the number of  
uncoil ectable past-due accounts

due to cash flow difficulties

excellent credit rating

financial difficulties/needs/services

in checking your credit background

it is our policy

I understand and appreciate your  
position, but

review of our files

steady credit payments

subject only to normal credit  
requirements

unable to accommodate you at this  
time

unpaid balance

we are happy/pleased to approve

will you please run a credit check  
on

## SENTENCES

Because our inquiries disclosed a number of past-due and unpaid accounts, we are unable to extend the line of credit you requested.

Could you could see your way clear to lending me \$200 for approximately three weeks, until I receive my income tax refund (enclosed is a copy of my return, showing the amount I will be receiving)?

Cressida Mary MacPhail, 1968 Taylor Avenue, Bretton, IN 47834, has applied to the Maxwell Credit Union for a loan, and gave us your name as a reference.

Eileen Schwartz has had an excellent credit history with this company, and we recommend her highly as a credit customer.

I appreciate your courtesy in allowing me to pay off the balance of my account in small installments.

I'm writing to notify you of an error in our credit history and to request an immediate correction.

I would appreciate your raising my credit limit from \$10,000 to \$20,000.

Please close my Fortis-Pryde account, effective immediately.

Please keep us in mind for your other credit needs.

The credit bureau cites repeated credit delinquencies.

We are pleased to report that our credit dealings with Angela Crossby have been excellent.

We are puzzled that our application for a home equity line of credit has been refused—please send us a copy of our credit report, if that was the problem, or your explanation for this refusal.

We are unable to furnish you with any current credit information on Emerson-Toller—they have not been a credit customer of ours for over ten years.

We expect to be making large purchases of office furniture from your firm as well as routine purchases of office supplies and would like to open a credit account with you.

We have run into some difficulties checking the references you supplied.

We note a persistent pattern of nonpayment in your credit history.

We suggest you reapply for the loan once you have resolved some of these problems.

We will appreciate any credit information you can give us about Walter Tillotson.

## PARAGRAPHS

Enclosed please find a check for \$457.32, which will bring my account up to date. I am sorry that I let the account become past due. I expect to keep it current in the future.

I would like to see the credit record you currently have on me. I am applying for a second mortgage on my home next month, and would not want to be unpleasantly surprised by anything that may be on file. Thank you.

I am pleased to report that we were able to approve your loan request for the amount of \$5,000. A check is enclosed, along with a payment booklet and a packet of payment envelopes. Please read your repayment schedule carefully.

We are sorry to report that your loan application has not been approved. Our decision was based primarily on information received from the Carnaby Reporting Services credit bureau. You may want to look at their record on you to verify that it is correct. If it is, we suggest working with a financial counselor, something that has been helpful to several of our customers. We will be happy to review your loan application at a later date if your circumstances change.

In order to set up a credit account for you with Copper Beeches, we need the following information: company name and tax identification number; a copy of your annual report; the names of banks with which you currently have accounts and those account numbers; names and phone numbers of at least three companies from whom you have purchased materials in the past six months. We appreciate your business and look forward to serving you.

Because of an electrical fire at our main plant three months ago, we have been experiencing some temporary financial difficulties and have fallen behind on our payments to you. We expect to rectify the situation

by the end of the year. In the meantime, please accept the enclosed check on account. We thank you for your understanding.

We must report that our business experiences with the Baroness de la Cruchecassée have been less than satisfactory. Over a period of eighteen months we have failed to collect anything on a fairly large outstanding balance. We trust you will keep this information confidential.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

TO: Dudley Credit Data  
 FROM: Eustace Landor, Landor First Banks  
 DATE: September 3, 2003  
 RE: Edith Millbank

Will you please run a credit check for us on:

*Edith Millbank*  
*1844 Coningsby*  
*Oswald, OH 45042*  
*Social Security # 000-00-0000*

Ms. Millbank is taking out a loan application with us, and we wish to verify the information she has given us with regard to her credit history.

Thank you.

Dear Ms. Panzoust,

Thank you for your letter of March 16 requesting our opinion of the creditworthiness of Valmouth Fiber Arts.

We have had only the most limited business transactions with them and, since they have always been on a cash basis with us, we have no idea of their financial standing. I would not feel comfortable expressing an opinion on so little information.

I'm sorry I couldn't have been more helpful.

Re: Loan #211925

Dear Ms. Parry-Lewis,

We have reviewed your request for a renewal of your home equity loan, as required by Raine National Bank every five years. In addition to a pattern of late payments and frequent disagreements about interest payments, we find that your current financial obligations seem excessive for your stated income. As a result, we are unable to grant you a renewal.

We would be happy to serve your banking needs in the future. If you meet our criteria for a home equity loan renewal in six months, please re-apply and we will waive the new-loan fees.

Sincerely,

Dear Michael Dunne,

We noticed that you have not used your Pearson Charge Card in some time now. If you do not use it before it expires in March of 2004, we will be unable to issue you a new card for the following year.

We would be sorry to lose you as a good charge customer, but we think that you would lose too—lose out on such benefits as the \$250,000 flight insurance that is yours every time you charge an airline ticket on your card...the twice-yearly newsletter that saves you money by offering discounts on motels, car rentals, and vacation packages...the low annual rate...the variable interest rate...and the flexibility of a card that can be used at over 15,000 places of businesses!

We hope that you will rediscover the many uses and benefits of the versatile Pearson Charge Card!

Sincerely yours,

See also: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, ADJUSTMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, APOLOGIES, COLLECTION, COMPLAINTS, ORDERS, REFUSALS, REQUESTS, RESPONSES, THANK YOU.

# Letters of Disagreement

*Anyone who thinks there aren't two sides to every argument is probably in one.*

—THE COCKLE BUR

There are people who thrive on conflict, and there are those who spend enormous energy avoiding it. If they live in the real world, both types will sooner or later have to write a letter about a disagreement. Disagreement is neither good nor bad, but the way you handle it affects subsequent events, feelings, and relationships.

## Letters of Disagreement May Concern

- contracts
- decisions
- oral agreements
- payments
- personnel problems
- policies/programs/procedures/regulations
- property lines

## How to Say It

- Refer to the previous correspondence or to the event responsible for the present letter.
- Outline the two opposing views or actions.
- Give clear (perhaps numbered) reasons for your stand, using statistics, quotations from an employee handbook, supportive anecdotal material, or names of witnesses or others who agree with you (with their permission).
- If appropriate, suggest an intermediate stage of negotiation: a reply to specific questions in your letter; further research; a meeting between the two of you or with third parties present; visits to a lawyer, accountant, or other appropriate expert.
- If the disagreement has reached the stage where you can effectively do this, state clearly the outcome you desire.

- End with your best wishes for a solution acceptable to both of you and a reference to good future relations.

### What Not to Say

- Don't put the person on the defensive. Use more "I" than "you" phrases ("you" statements tend to sound accusatory). Make sure your letter doesn't make the person feel bad, shamed, inept, or weak; people who have been made to feel small are not likely to give you what you want.
- Avoid language that escalates the situation ("ridiculous," "egregious," "brainless"). This is counterproductive as well as unconvincing. "Neither irony nor sarcasm is argument." (Rufus Choate) It also betrays vulnerability. "Strong and bitter words indicate a weak cause." (Victor Hugo)
- Avoid emotional statements. Concentrate on facts instead of feelings. For example, saying, "I don't feel this is fair" does not carry as much weight as saying, "I believe it is unfair that only one out of seven secretaries is consistently asked to work overtime—and without overtime pay."

### Tips on Writing

- The tone of your letter can make all the difference between being heard and not being heard. Strive for a letter that is factual, dispassionate, considerate, and even-handed.
- Be clear about your goal. Before writing, think about the end of this sentence: "I want them to..." Do you want a rebate, an exchange, repairs? Do you want an apology, a corrected statement, a credit? Do you want to convince the person that their facts, statistics, opinions are wrong? Do you want something redone?
- Help the other person save face. Set up the situation so that the person can do what you want in a way that makes them feel generous, gracious, powerful, and willing.
- Although active voice is usually preferred to the passive voice, consider using the more tactful passive voice when involved in a disagreement. Instead of saying, "You did this," say, "This was done."
- Examine your position for possible areas of negotiation. Can you trade one point for another? Can you accept anything less than what you originally wanted?
- When writing to disapprove the passage of legislation, note whether the bill is state or federal and then write the appropriate lawmakers. Federal bills have numbers prefixed by HR (House Resolution) or SR (Senate Resolution). State bills are usually denoted HF (House File) and SF (Senate File).

## Special Situations

- You will handle most disagreements yourself or with the help of family or co-workers. However, in situations like the following you may want to consult with a lawyer: in marital separations where letters contain admissions, demands, or threats; where you need to reduce informal, oral agreements to written agreements; when family disagreements about an estate become heated; when you are being accused of something; when the disagreement escalates to threats of lawsuits.

- Sometimes groups use letterwriting campaigns on controversial issues. A sample letter is distributed for proponents to copy over their own signature. When representatives are interested in the number of people on each side of an issue, such letterwriting campaigns have value. Most often, however, form letters do not get much attention. One well-written original letter will carry more weight with a lawmaker than a hundred form letters. Know when a group effort is effective and when it is not. "If you were the Establishment, which would you rather see coming in the door: one lion or five hundred mice?" (Florynce B. Kennedy)

- When you write to lawmakers to inform them of your opinion on an issue, you often don't need to receive a three-page reply outlining their position—a position with which you're already familiar from the newspapers. In this case, end your letter with, "Please do not respond to this letter. I know your views; I wanted you to know mine."

## Format

- Letters dealing with business disagreements are typed on letterhead stationery.

- When writing about personal disagreements, your letter will appear friendlier and a little more open to negotiation if you handwrite it. If you wish to appear firm and not open to negotiation, typing is best.

## WORDS

argument

controversy

dilemma

dissatisfaction

feud

impasse

break

dead-end

disapprove

disturbing

friction

incompatible

conflict

deadlock

displeased

estrangement

impasse

infuriated

contention

differ

dispute

faction

incompatible

irritating

misunderstand- ing	object	offense	protest
quarrel	reconcile	regrettable	rift
stalemate	standstill	unfortunate	unhappy

## PHRASES

agree to differ/disagree	as I understand it
at cross purposes	be at odds with
believe you should know that	bone of contention
bury the hatchet	come to terms
complicated situation	conduct an inquiry
difference of opinion	direct your attention to
disputed point	do a disservice to
fail to agree	I am convinced that
I assume/presume/think/have to doubt that	I have the impression that
in my estimation/judgment/opin- ion/view	in the best interests of
I take it that	it seems to me
matter/point in dispute/at issue/ under discussion/in question	my information is
part company with	point of view
question at issue	register my opinion
strongly oppose	take into consideration
think differently	to my way of thinking
to the best of my knowledge	wonder if you are aware that

## SENTENCES

Are we ready to put this to a vote?

Do you think it would help to call in an arbitrator?

Enclosed please find several abstracts that may be helpful.

I agree with the necessity of fundraising for the purchase and maintenance of band instruments, but I disagree with the fundraising program adopted for next year.



I am convinced that the passage of this bill would do more harm than good/is not in the best interests of the state/would be a grave error.

I disagree with the store policy of filling prescriptions with generic drugs without notifying the customer.

I found the language and tone of your last letter completely unacceptable; please put us in touch with someone else in your organization who can handle this matter.

If you would like some background reading on this issue, I would be happy to furnish you with some.

I received your letter this morning and am sorry to hear that you cannot accept our terms.

Several of the points you mention are negotiable; some are not.

We are submitting this matter to an independent referee.

We still have one major area of disagreement.

What would make the situation more agreeable to you?

## PARAGRAPHS

I realize that there is technically no more to be said about the Dillon-Reed merger, but I would like to state for the record that I strongly oppose the move. I refer you to the enclosed independent report that we commissioned from Elkus, Inc. This is the classic situation where one owns a dog but persists in barking oneself. The Elkus people, acknowledged experts in the field, advised us against the merger. Do we have strong enough grounds for rejecting their conclusions? I think not.

I know we've talked about this until we're both blue in the face, but I feel strongly that Great-Aunt Elsie is not yet ready for a nursing home. It would make her unhappy and shorten her life to be placed in one prematurely. What changes would you need to see before you could feel comfortable about her remaining in her apartment?

My lawyer requested the addition of the following clause to the contract: "Clause S. This agreement will expire ten years from the date of execution." The clause does not appear in the final contract. I know this issue was in dispute at one time, but I understood that you had finally agreed to it. I am returning the unsigned contracts to you for correction.

We seem to be at an impasse on determining the boundary line between our properties. Would you be interested in sharing the costs of hiring a surveyor?

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Ms. Burling-Ward:

I enjoy working for Stegner Publishing, and you in particular have been most helpful in introducing me to people and showing me around.

When I was interviewed for the job, Mr. Oliver consistently used the term “production editor,” and the job duties he listed were those generally associated with the position of production editor.

During my three weeks on the job, I have done nothing but copyediting. After speaking to you yesterday and discovering that this was not just a training stage but my permanent position, I suspect there has been a misunderstanding.

I would like to meet with you and Mr. Oliver sometime soon to clarify this situation.

Sincerely,

Dear Nandie and Victor,

Our jazz trio has been so compatible and has had such a good time these last three years that I’m uncomfortable with our present disagreement. I think we’re used to getting along and thus don’t know how to handle it when we don’t agree.

Here’s my suggestion. Next Thursday night, instead of rehearsing, let’s meet at Saduko’s Restaurant for dinner. Each of us will bring three 3 x 5 cards with our reasons for changing the trio’s name.

After a good meal and some non-work conversation, we will exchange cards so that each of us is holding the three viewpoints. I hope we can then come to a good decision.

What do you think?

Angelo

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Archibald Craven,

Thank you for your letter of November 30, disputing the payment of interest charges on your “12-month interest-free” purchase of furniture from us.

When you purchased your sofa, chair, and ottoman last November 18, we offered to carry the full amount of the purchase, \$1,574.97, interest-free for one year—and you accepted our offer. The terms of the offer were explained at that time.

Each month thereafter you received a statement from us, noting the amount of the original purchase, the accruing finance charges, and stating clearly, “If you pay the payoff amount by the expiration date listed below, you will be credited for the amount of interest accumulated on that purchase.”

You did not pay the payoff amount by the expiration date of our agreement, November 19 of this year; thus you now owe the payoff amount plus the accrued interest of \$272.61.

Please note that interest will continue to accrue until all charges are paid.

For further questions, call Mary Lennox in the Accounts Due Department at 555-1234.

See also: COMPLAINTS, NEIGHBORS, REFUSALS, SENSITIVE.

# Letters to the Editor

*It were not best that we should all think alike;  
it is difference of opinion that makes horse-races.*

—MARK TWAIN

Letters to the editor constitute some of people's favorite reading. Knowing this, almost every newspaper and periodical prints a limited number of letters in each issue. A daily newspaper publishes as many as 30 to 40 percent of the letters it receives; a national weekly newsmagazine publishes only 2 to 5 percent of its incoming letters. Fortunately, there are ways of increasing the chances of your letter being chosen for publication.

## Write a Letter to the Editor When

- you agree or disagree with a story, article, news item, editorial stance, or other letterwriter
- you have an opinion about a topic of current national or local interest
- you want to correct published information
- you want to reach a large number of people with information that you think would interest them

## How to Say It

- In the first sentence, refer to the issue that prompted your letter ("the Nov. 1 editorial opposing a new hockey arena") so that readers know immediately what you're talking about.
- State your position ("I agree with," "I oppose," "I question").
- Briefly support, defend, or explain your position. Most publications have word limits for these letters; if you exceed them, editors may trim your letter in ways you don't like. Aim for around 100 to 300 words.
- Include facts (statistics, studies, articles, items of record, quotes) rather than feelings and impressions. If you have specific knowledge or a professional connection with an issue, mention it; this often makes publication likelier and your opinion more useful.

- Indicate what action, if any, you want readers to take (form neighborhood block watches, call legislators, boycott a product, sign a petition, stop littering).
- Close with a startling, memorable, or powerful sentence, if possible—something that makes the reader want to go back and read your letter again.
- Give your first and last name, or at least two initials and a last name, address, and daytime phone number. Sign your name. Almost all publications insist on this. When letters to the editor are signed by a number of people, usually only one or two of the names are published (followed by a note “and 16 others”); most publications prefer to use that space for opinions, not lists of names.

### What Not to Say

- Don’t begin your letter with, “You won’t dare print this letter.” Editors generally delete such sentences because, in fact, they dare to print a wide range of opinion, including letters critical of themselves.
- Avoid whining (“It’s not fair,” “It always happens to me”). It does not make interesting reading.
- Don’t expect newspapers or magazines to print letters that are thinly disguised advertisements for your business or your group. If you want people to know about a nonprofit, community-wide event, editors are generally willing to include it in an events column.
- Avoid half-truths or inaccuracies. Letters are subject to editing for length, libel, good taste, newspaper style, and accuracy. Editors will check the facts in your letters.
- Don’t write anything that can be proved malicious (even if it’s true) and don’t write anything that can’t be proved (even if there’s no intent to harm); publishers won’t print anything libelous.
- Don’t use threats, bullying language, pejorative adjectives (“stupid,” “ridiculous,” “redneck,” “bleeding heart liberal”), or stereotypes (“what can you expect from a lawyer,” “labor unions have always looked out for themselves first,” “another anti-male feminist”). Certain readers will agree with your sentiments. Most, however, will see, quite properly, that such language indicates a weak argument. Margaret Thatcher once said, “I always cheer up immensely if an attack is particularly wounding because I think, well, if they attack one personally, it means they have not a single political argument left.”
- Don’t end your letter with “Think about it!” One editor says this line shows up routinely in letters and is just as routinely deleted. If your letter appears on the opinion-editorial (op-ed) page, the implication is that you want people to think about it.

- Don't submit poetry, lost-and-found announcements, or personal messages ("I'm looking for descendants of Jenny Treibel").

## Tips on Writing

- Check the area near the letters-to-the-editor column for guidelines; most publications have requirements.
- Address your letter "To the Editor," rather than to the person responsible for the article, cartoon, or letter you're writing about.
- Although regional publications might accept letters commenting on a previously published letter, most national publications have policies against publishing letters about letters.
- Your topic should be timely; editors rarely run letters about issues that are weeks or months old.
- Limit yourself to one topic, to one main thought. If you don't stick to the point, your letter will probably be edited so that it does.
- Your topic should be important to more than one person (you). Readers may not care how awful your neighbors are, unless you can tie their behavior to a larger issue (people who don't shovel their walks).
- To get a letter accepted in a competitive market, aim for pithiness, humor, unusual information, or a twist on conventional thinking. Editors like letters of interest to other readers, opinionated letters on a controversy, letters reflecting a unique point of view on a broad topic, and letters that are clear, entertaining, and thought-provoking.
- When you feel strongly about an issue, get others to write too so that the letters to the editor column reflects that many people feel the way you do.
- Have others read your letter; oftentimes you are too close to the problem to see how your letter may affect others.
- Most papers won't print letters from the same individual more frequently than every month or two, so if you've just had a letter published there's no point in writing again soon.
- Some publications want letters original to them, not copies of letters sent to other publications. Check your publication's editorial policy.

## Special Situations

- Anonymous letters aren't often printed as most publishers believe their readers have a right to know whose views are being expressed. However, some circumstances (prospect of physical harm to the writer or loss of a job) justify anonymous letters. Editors will print such letters over a "Name Withheld." Call first to be sure this is possible. When

you write, specify that the letter is to be published only if your name does not appear.

- Letters-to-the-editor columns become especially popular just before elections. Some publications print letters that support one candidate or criticize another; others ban election-related letters during a period immediately preceding an election or on Election Day in order to avoid being used to launch last-minute offensives. Blatant politicking usually never makes it to the printed page; editors have learned to spot letters that are thinly disguised publicity efforts or those that are part of an effort to create a bandwagon effect.

- When asking for a correction or retraction of an inaccuracy, begin by identifying the erroneous article by date, section, page, and column. Be polite, factual, firm. Offer to supply correct data, proofs of your assertion, and phone numbers to call for verification.

- Write letters to the editor commending civic groups or individuals who have contributed to the common good in ways that may not be known to everyone. Letters like these not only add welcome relief to the usual fare of the letters column, but they build positive community feelings and often engender more of the same productive activities. Note, however, that “nice” letters don’t often get published; this kind of letter needs an extra dash of humor, wit, or color.

## Format

- Editors prefer typewritten letters. If you handwrite a letter, it must be legible.
- Most publications accept e-mailed or faxed letters.

## WORDS

advice	aspect	assume	attitude
bias	commentary	conclude	conjecture
consensus	consider	contradict	controversy
disagree	disapprove	dissatisfied	disturbing
doctrinaire	dogmatic	embarrassing	examine
express	impression	infer	inflammatory
insulting	judgmental	misunderstand- ing	notion
offensive	omission	one-sided	partisan
perspective	persuade	position	posture
prejudiced	premise	provocative	slant

stand  
view

suppose

surmise

unfortunate

## PHRASES

after reading your Sept. 29 article on	a May 3 <i>New York Post Dispatch</i> article spoke of
an affront to those of us who	cartoonist Humphry Clinker should be aware that
did a slow burn when I read	difference of opinion
fail to agree	how can anyone state, as did Laetitia Snap (June 3), that
I agree wholeheartedly with	I am hortified by the Ang. 11 report
I am one of the many "misguided" people who was outraged by	
I am puzzled by the reference to the long-term effects of	I am writing on behalf of
I disagree with the Reverend Septimus Crisparkle's premise (Feb. 7)	I found the short story in your September issue to be
I must take issue with	infuriating to see that
in response to a July 3 letterwriter who said	I really enjoyed
I strongly object	I take exception to the opinions expressed by
it seems to me	I was disturbed/in-censed/pleased/angry/disappointed to read that
letterwriter Muriel McComber's suggestion (Aug. 9) was intriguing, but	made me see red
neglected to mention	one side of the story
on the one hand/on the other hand	point in dispute
presented a false picture	read with great/considerable interest
recipe for disaster	regarding Senator Sam Blundel's new bill for the hearing-impaired
several letterwriters have commented upon	the article on women in trades did much to



your editorial position on

your Sept. 17 editorial on

## SENTENCES

A Dec. 9 writer is incorrect in saying that the Regional Transit Board was abolished several years ago; we are, in fact, alive and well.

I am writing to express my appreciation for your excellent coverage of City Council meetings on the local groundwater issue.

I commend you for your Aug. 11 editorial on magnet schools.

I disagree with Elizabeth Saunders' Apr. 5 column on city-supported recycling.

I look forward to seeing a published retraction of the incorrect information given in this article.

In Hennie Feinschreiber's Dec. 9 column on the living will, she uses statistics that have long since been discredited.

In his December 1 Counterpoint, "Tax Breaks for the Rich," Gerald Tetley suggests that out of fear of giving the rich a break, we are actually cutting off our noses to spite our face.

I was disappointed that not one of the dozens who wrote to complain about the hike in municipal sewer rates noticed that the rates are actually lower than they were ten years ago.

Many thanks for your unpopular but eminently sane editorial stand on gun control (July 2).

Please consider the cumulative effect of such legislation on our children.

Please do not drop Flora Lewis/Cal Thomas/Ellen Goodman/George Will from your editorial pages.

Several important factors were omitted from your Apr. 6 article on wide-area telephone service.

The writer of the Mar. 16 letter against triple trailers seemed to have little factual understanding of semi-truck traffic and professional truck drivers.

Your Aug. 3 editorial on workers' compensation overlooked a crucial factor.

Your June 29 editorial on child care failed to mention one of the largest and most effective groups working on this issue.

## PARAGRAPHS

Has anyone noticed that the city has become overrun with dogs in the last several years? Most of these dogs have no collars and run in packs of five to eight dogs. If I had small children, I'd worry when they played

outdoors. Where have these dogs come from? Whose problem is it? The city council's? The health department's? The police department's?

Letter writer Charles Shandon neglected to mention in his long, rather hysterical diatribe against mayoral candidate Hugh Desprez that he is running Mary Shandon's bid for the mayor's office. He is also her husband.

Your story on the newest technology in today's emergency rooms featured the views of hospital administrators, medical care-givers, and manufacturers' representatives. Nowhere was a patient mentioned. Is overlooking the patient also a feature of today's emergency rooms? (If it is, it's not new.)

To those of you who have been expressing yourself in these pages about the presence of wild geese in the city parks: Hello! A park is supposed to be natural. It is not meant to be as clean as your kitchen floor. It has messy leaves and gravel and bugs and, yes, goose grease. If you can't handle nature in the raw, there's always your back yard.

Count at least six women (the undersigned) who were outraged at your "news story" on the recently appointed Episcopalian bishop for our area. You devoted several lines early on in the story (thus implying their relative importance) to Ms. Dinah Morris's clothes, hairstyle, and even the color of her fingernail polish. Do you do this for new male bishops?

There was an error in your otherwise excellent article about the Lamprey Brothers Moving and Storage. In addition to brothers Henry, Colin, and Stephen (whom you mentioned), there is also brother Michael, a full partner.

A flurry of letter writers urges us to rally against the proposed congressional pay raise. I wonder if they understand the protection that such a raise would give us against special interest groups. Let's give this one a closer look. It may actually be a sheep in wolf's clothing.

I commend Meg Bishop for the use of "people first" language in her Jan. 2 column. By using expressions such as "people with severe disabilities" rather than "the severely disabled" and "people with quadriplegia" rather than "quadriplegics," Bishop helps change the way society views people with disabilities.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Mr. Scott,

What happened to the ecclesiastical crossword puzzle you used to have every month in *The Abbot*?

To the Editor:

Several months ago, you announced a "bold new look" for the paper. Could we perhaps have the timid old look back?

Sometimes I find the financial pages behind the sports pages, sometimes in a section of their own, and occasionally with the classified ads. Usually the advice columnists and funnies are run together in their own section, but more often they are separated and positioned variously with the sports pages, the community news, the feature section, or the food pages.

I have tried to discern a method to your madness—perhaps on Mondays the sports have their own section, on Tuesdays they appear with the financial papers. No such luck. Somebody down there must just roll dice and say, “Ha! Let them try to find the foreign exchange rates today!”

Is there any hope for a more organized future?

Dear Mr. Burlap:

The excerpt from *Point Counter Point* in your June issue was excellent. I hope you will continue to offer us selections from lesser-known but high-quality literature.

Dear Business Editor:

An article in the Aug. 3 morning edition reported sales for our company in the billions. Naturally that would be nice, but it should have read millions. We would appreciate your printing a correction in the next edition of the paper.

Enclosed is our most recent annual report.

Dear Editor:

I read with interest the proposal to add four stories to the downtown public library building at a cost of \$5.3 million.

I am concerned, however, that no provision has been made for user access. As it now stands, hundreds of thousands of books are all but useless since no one can get to them. There are a handful of metered street parking spaces, but you must be lucky to find one. And then you must not forget to run out every hour and insert four more quarters (the meter readers are particularly active in this area).

How many of you have driven around and around and around hoping for a parking place? How many of you have walked five or six blocks carrying a back-breaking load of books? How many of you have gotten \$10 tickets because you forgot to feed the meter on time? It is utterly pointless to spend \$5.3 million on a facility that no one can use.

To the Editor:

The front page of your Nov. 3 issue carried a full-color picture of a car accident victim who later died.

We, the undersigned, worked with Hilda Derriford—some of us for only two years, some of us for as long as sixteen years. To see our good friend and co-worker displayed in her last moments for an unknowing

and uncaring public was one of the most painful things we can describe. How her husband and children felt about the picture is another story, but we can't think they were any less devastated than we were.

What is the point of using a photo like that? Can you defend such a practice in any logical, compassionate way?

See also: APPRECIATION, COMPLAINTS, DISAGREEMENTS.

# E-mail

*Admitting you don't have an e-mail address these days is almost like admitting you still listen to eight-track tapes.*

—TOM MCNICHOL

Less intrusive than the telephone and simpler than writing a letter, e-mail has been adopted by millions.

The hallmark of the e-mailed message is its conversational tone. Because questions and answers can be exchanged rapidly, it resembles a dialogue; a regular letter resembles a monologue. Senders dash off e-mails, knowing that if they make a mistake or omit information, they can send another e-mail in seconds.

E-mail has inspired a surge in communicating. People who haven't written a letter in years use e-mail because of its simplicity, directness, and speed. When contacting someone in another time zone or on another biorhythmic pattern, there is no fear of waking them with a phone call. When working late, you can send information to another person's electronic mailbox for retrieval first thing in the morning. E-mail is particularly useful when you have a thirty-second message to send someone who usually involves you in a fifteen-minute phone call. It also encourages the sending of quick notes that wouldn't, in themselves, warrant the effort of a regular letter.

## E-mail When Your Message Is

- brief
- informal
- sent to a number of people
- timely
- urgent

## How to Say It

- Double-check every e-mail address before sending your message. The system is absolutely unforgiving. "Almost correct" doesn't cut it.

- Use a subject line, a word or brief phrase to tell your reader right away what the e-mail is about. Most e-mail servers have their own format, but all will have some sort of space for this purpose. Examples of subject lines:  
Re: Welcome back!  
Re: newsletter error  
Re: benefits hotline  
Subject: the check's in the mail  
Subject: fundraising meeting  
Subject: new corporate library hours
- Start with "Hi" or "Hello," or the person's name followed by a comma or dash. The "Dear" convention of letters is generally too formal for e-mail.
- State your message succinctly. (Some people suggest limiting e-mail messages to one screen.)
- If appropriate, tell what action you expect: a telephone call, an e-mail response, attendance at a meeting. When the e-mail is simply for their information, indicate this.
- Close with a courtesy, if you wish, or with just your name. Formal closings ("Sincerely," "Truly yours") aren't necessary.
- In some cases, include your full name, title, telephone number, and e-mail address. This identifies you quickly and is useful if the e-mail is forwarded to a third party who needs to contact you.

### What Not to Say

- Don't send high-impact news (a death, new company president, serious illness) by e-mail.
- Don't write anything you don't want the whole world to know. E-mail is far from private and it is easily forwarded or misrouted. It was never meant for confidential messages.
- Don't send an urgent message by e-mail unless you know the person is expecting it or you call to say it's coming; there's no guarantee it will be read immediately. Some people check their e-mail frequently and in many offices users are notified when e-mail comes in, but other people may not read an e-mail for days.
- Don't write angry e-mails; it's too easy to fire off our first thoughts and regret them afterwards.
- Don't use all capital letters unless you want the recipient to understand that you are YELLING.

### Tips on Writing

- An e-mail address consists of (1) a name identifying the individual or group ("xyz"); (2) the "at" sign ("@"); (3) the name of the server

(for example, “earthling”); (4) a code that identifies the mailer by type (domain):.com (commercial);.net (network);.gov (government);.edu (educational institution);.org (organization—usually nonprofit);.mil (military);.st (state government). Thus: xyz@earthling.org

• Include one topic per e-mail.

• Use everyday, informal language. In a letter you might write “I will”; in an e-mail you write “I’ll.”

• Check for accuracy, spelling, and punctuation before transmitting; once it’s gone, it’s gone.

• When you send copies of an e-mail (listing the copied recipients’ names under “cc”) be aware of the possible effect on your recipient. E-mail has made copying so easy that it is sometimes done unnecessarily and counterproductively. When appropriate and not detrimental to your original recipient, protect other people’s privacy by copying the message to them “bcc” (blind carbon copy).

• Certain options don’t work in e-mail (italics, underlining, foreign accents). To indicate italics, put asterisks before and after the word or phrase (“I’m sending you \*two\* instead of three”).

• Don’t waste people’s time with trivial e-mails—jokes or idle thoughts that we’d never consider typing, signing, and sending through the regular mail.

• Before forwarding an e-mail, obtain the original sender’s permission and delete the headers and extraneous material.

• Do not pass on others’ e-mail addresses without their permission. And never give your password or user ID to anyone you don’t know well.

• Abbreviations are popular with some e-mailers. Others never use them and even find them annoying. Examples include:

ASAP = as soon as possible

FYI = for your information

BTW = by the way

TIA = thanks in advance

LOL = laughed out loud

FAQ = frequently asked questions

OIC = Oh, I see

WTG = way to go

• Emoticons are also used by some people, shunned by others. For example,;-) stands for a happy face (look at it sideways) and: ( for an unhappy face;:) for a smile,;-) for a wink,;-D for a laugh, and:’( for crying.

• Graphics may not be able to be read by everyone so skip them when unnecessary.

• Acknowledge e-mail, especially in work situations. When you can’t respond immediately, send a reply saying the message was received and you will write later. Some systems send an automatic electronic acknowledgment of every e-mail that comes in.

## Special Situations

- If you use e-mail at work, familiarize yourself with your company's policies on e-mail usage, privacy, security, and archiving. The e-mail system is company property and most organizations have guidelines about its use by employees.
- The American Management Association recommends documenting your business e-mail transactions so that you can retrace your steps if necessary.
- Attachments (long files hooked onto your e-mail "cover letter") are iffy. If you work for a large company where your computers are effectively protected against viruses, you send and receive attachments worry-free. Individuals using computers in small businesses or at home may decide not to open an attachment because of the possibility of importing a virus. When you must send an attachment, be sure your recipient will open it.
- An estimated 15 to 30 percent of the e-mail received in the United States is spam (an unsolicited and generally unwanted e-mail sent to thousands of e-mail addresses, the electronic equivalent of junk mail). Chain letters are both spam and scam; do not indulge. Eliminating spam has so far not been successful. Some software will block certain addresses so that you don't receive their mail, but the e-mailers get around this by inventing random and unfathomable new e-mail addresses, many of which are not even the correct addresses. In addition, should you respond to their invitation to tell them you want your address removed from their files, they will rejoice because they have found a "live" one and send you more spam than ever. Just delete them. Don't even sigh, just delete.
- Sometimes a friend or acquaintance stuffs your e-box with jokes (that you've heard before), chain letters, maudlin anecdotes, canned advice, virus scares, and notices of websites that you absolutely must visit. Letitia Baldrige, former White House social secretary, advises sending the person an e-mail saying, "I really appreciate your thinking of me and keeping me on your routing list, but I'm sorry to say I'm so darned busy, I can't read my necessary, urgent mail, much less amusing mail. I think it's time you substituted my name with someone else's because Father Time won't let me enjoy your e-mails."

## Format

- The format will depend upon your server although you will have some choices (length of your lines, whether to include the other person's message in your e-mail).
- Making a hard copy of an e-mail message (that is, printing it) gives



it the same permanence and nearly the same validity as a letter or memo.

## WORDS

announce	answer	attachment	explain
following	forwarding	inform	inquire
notify	remind	reply	respond

## PHRASES

alert you to the possibility	ask your help
do you know	for your information
here are	in answer to your question
information you wanted/requested	just a note to let you know
please let me know ASAP	send me a copy of
speedy response	wanted to follow up
will you please send	

## SENTENCES

A dear friend of mine would like to ask you a couple of questions—may I forward your e-mail address to her?

Did you see the article on hog confinements in today's Des Moines Register?

Do you have a phone number for Joe Mangles?

Just a reminder about the conference call with Eusabio International this afternoon at 3 p.m.

New surge protectors are now available for anyone who needs one.

Subject: Small-diameter sleeve tools

Tax forms are available in the lobby from now until April 15, thanks to Courtenay Brundit, who obtained them for us.

We've been notified that Highway 36 will be closed from July 9–15; you may want to plan alternate routes to work.

Will you be home tomorrow around 5:15 so I can drop off the skis?

You asked if the company store currently has sandpaper seconds: yes, it does.

## PARAGRAPHS

Please mark your calendars. William Denny, industrial engineer at our new high tech data entry facility in Porter, will explain the latest technology on Thursday, Jan. 21 at 3 p.m. in Building 201B, Room 43. A question-and-answer period will follow.

You wanted to know who keeps my Harley in such great shape? I do! Okay, okay, I know what you mean. The greatest Harley repair and service east of the Mississippi is The Caloveglia Shop on South Douglas.

Thanks for the new programmable multifunction mouse that you sent over. I'm having a good time with it!

In response to your question about the community organizer position, yes, benefits are included. In addition, the deadline for applying has been changed to September 30.

Would you please let me know the name of the contractor who did your deck? We're inspired enough to get going on ours.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

From: burb@email.com

To: realty@email.com

Date: Fri, 16 Aug 2002 12:41:00

Subject: Purchase agreement for 1711 Grismer

Yes, draw up a purchase agreement at the asking price and fax me a copy at 651/555-1234. Thanks.

From: info@ducksfordinner.com

To: foxes@email.com

Date: 20 Nov 2000 14:30:01

Subject: Order confirmation # 82654560

This is an automated message acknowledging acceptance of your online order. You may check your order status by writing to: info@ducksfordinner.com

From: clubred@aol.com

To: juliagotrocks@email.com

Date: Tue, 18 Jan 2002 16:53:31 EST

Subject: Thank you!

Hello Julia—I received your check. Thanks! I put \$30 toward dues, and \$50 as a contribution to our latest fundraising drive. You'll be getting a fundraiser letter but it will be fyi only—not to ask you to give again. Netty

From: sgk@email.com  
To: rmk@email.com  
Date: Wed, 29 Mar 2003 17:02:35 +0400  
Subject: Help—April 1

Hello from Russia! I'm planning my April 1 English class around the idea of practical jokes and I'd appreciate your help. (1) Could you describe this tradition as far as you know it from your own experience? (2) Do you remember a really successful April 1 practical joke? (3) In Russia the joke ends with the cliché "S pervym aprelya!" which means "Congratulations on April 1!" What do they say in the circumstances in your part of the world? Thanks!

From: hcalverly@email.com  
To: thewhitecompany@email.com  
Date: Tue, 29 Jul 1997 17:34:08 (EDT)  
Subject: ATTN: Doyle

I received the fax of the essay. It was above and beyond the call of duty, and yes, I still needed it. I owe you one. Best, Hugh

From: msadlier@email.com  
To: kcairns@email.com  
Date: 07 Apr 2001 13:01:21  
Subject: favor

Kitty, would you be willing to spend fifteen minutes or so speaking with a high-school senior in your area who's interested in the Fanny Gaslight School of Design? Thanks!

See also: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, FAMILY, FOLLOW-UP, MEMOS.

# Letters Dealing with Employment

*It's strange how unimportant your job is when you ask for a raise,  
and how important it is when you want a day off.*

—HOWIE LASSETER

Robert Orben said, “Every morning I get up and look through the Forbes list of the richest people in America. If I’m not there, I go to work.” Most of us go to work.

While we’re there, letters between employers and employees contribute to (or undermine) workplace morale, efficiency, and rapport.

The employee is affected, directly or indirectly, by letters that range from requesting a raise to asking for clarification of retirement benefits. The employer depends on well-written letters to maintain good employee relations and to resolve personnel problems that interfere with the company’s goals.

## Employment Letters Deal with

- acknowledgments: applications/proposals/suggestions (see also ACKNOWLEDGMENTS)
- advice/complaints/reprimands (see ADVICE, COMPLAINTS)
- announcements: layoffs/changes/company policies (see ANNOUNCEMENTS, INSTRUCTIONS)
- approvals: raise/promotion/projects/requests/changes (see also ACCEPTANCES)
- congratulations/commendations (see also CONGRATULATIONS)
- getting a job (see APPLICATIONS, COVER LETTERS, REFERENCES, RÉSUMÉS)
- interviews (see APPOINTMENTS, FOLLOW-UP, RÉSUMÉS)
- invitations: retirement parties/service anniversaries/awards ceremonies/speaking engagements (see also INVITATIONS)
- meetings: announcing/canceling/changing/postponing (see also APPOINTMENTS)
- networking (see INTRODUCTIONS)
- references and recommendations (see REFERENCES)
- refusals: raises/promotions/proposals/requests (see REFUSALS)

- requests: raise/promotion/project approval/interview/meeting (see REQUESTS)
- resignations
- résumés and letters of application (see RÉSUMÉS)
- retirement (see also ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, CONGRATULATIONS, INVITATIONS)
- terminations

## How to Say It

- Date every memo or letter.
- When responding to job applicants: (1) If you are unable to make an immediate choice among applicants, acknowledge receipt of their materials or thank them for their interviews. If possible, say when you will notify them of your decision. Thank them for their interest in your company. (2) In the case of a rejection, express appreciation for the applicant's time and interest and state simply that you are unable to make an offer. If appropriate, briefly explain the decision. Close with positive comments on the person's application, an invitation to re-apply at a later time (if you mean it), and your confidence of success in the person's search for a suitable position. (3) When offering someone a position, open with congratulatory and complimentary remarks. Include confirmation of the job description and the name and telephone number of someone who can answer further questions. Repeat a selling point or two about the company to influence the person's decision to accept the offer. Close with an expression of goodwill about the person's future with your organization.
- When announcing a change in company policies, procedures, or regulations, include: description of the new policy; reference to the old policy, if necessary for clarification; brief reason for the change; expected benefits of the change; deadline for the change implementation; instructions or enclosures that further explain the change; name and telephone number of someone to answer questions or help with problems; expression of your enthusiasm about the change.
- When you arrange an in-house meeting by memo or e-mail: explain the purpose of the meeting, offer possible dates and times, and express your appreciation for the person's attention to your request. To change a meeting time, always mention the original date and time and ask for acknowledgment of the new time. To cancel a meeting, repeat the time and date, state that you must cancel (briefly explaining why), and apologize for the inconvenience. If you miss a scheduled meeting, write an immediate, sincere apology.
- When writing to request a raise, be brief and factual, supplying as much supporting material as possible (letters of commendation, sales records, copies of patents, research papers, evaluations, list of

awards). No one ever has a “right” to a raise; do not let this attitude color your letter. Avoid threatening to leave unless you mean it. Don’t compare your salary to others’; it is tactless, usually meaningless, and puts your reader on the defensive. Instead, show how your work has become more valuable to the company or speak of an “adjustment” to reflect additional hours, duties, or productivity.

- When writing a reprimand, begin with a positive or complimentary remark. Describe factually the employee behavior and, if necessary, tell why it is unacceptable. If appropriate, tell how this came to your attention. Suggest how the employee can change. State the consequences of continuing the behavior. Close with an expression of confidence that the situation will be handled successfully. A reprimand is brief, respectful, encouraging, and positive (instead of writing, “Do not make personal phone calls while patients are in the waiting room,” say, “Please confine personal phone calls to times when the waiting room is empty.”). Your goal in writing a letter of reprimand is not to get revenge or blow off steam; it is to change employee behavior. Avoid condemning, belittling, haranguing, preaching, scolding, or patronizing the employee.
- Notifying employees of layoffs or terminations has become codified—because of labor unions, because of legal ramifications, and because it is most effective for large organizations to follow a uniform manner in dealing with them. When a letter is written, it is brief and might include: a statement about the layoff or termination; an expression of regret at the necessity of taking this measure; the date on which the layoff or termination becomes effective; details on severance pay, profit sharing, retirement benefits, and medical coverage; in the case of a layoff, the possible length of the time, if known; details on company layoff and termination policies, career counseling, letters of recommendation, available public assistance, and other information that helps employees cope with the layoff or termination; the name and telephone number of someone who can answer questions. When the termination is due to the employee’s poor work record or behavior, you will want to follow company and legal guidelines carefully. Tell why they’re being fired and document previous warnings.
- When resigning, an oral notice may be all that is necessary. Generally, however, it is useful for both employer and employee to have a written record of the resignation. The common practice is to resign in person and follow up with a letter. Begin by writing something positive about the position, company, or organization you’re leaving. Give the effective date of your resignation. In most cases, give a reason for resigning: poor health; age; family move; work-related health problems; greater opportunities for advancement, higher salary or more desirable location with another company; wish to change careers; recent changes that have affected your position. If you’re leaving because of problems with management, co-workers,

restrictive company policies, or other negative reasons, be vague: “For personal reasons, I am resigning effective March 1.” Don’t use your letter as a dumping ground for complaints. Take your leave in a polite, dignified manner—even if the truth lies elsewhere. For one thing, you may need a letter of reference. For another, despite confidentiality, angry letters have a way of following you about in your professional community. And you don’t know when you might have dealings with the company in the future. If you’re leaving because of illegal or dishonest practices, take your information (with as much documentation as possible) to outside bureaus or agencies. If you’ve been asked to resign, your letter doesn’t refer to this; state simply that you are resigning, so that it appears that way in the official records. Offer to help find or train a replacement, if appropriate. End on a pleasant note, expressing appreciation for what you have learned, for your co-workers, for being associated with such a dynamic company, for being part of a new development. In some situations, write a one-sentence letter of resignation, giving no explanation.

- In responding to a letter of resignation, include a statement of acceptance “with regret,” positive comments on the person’s association with your organization, and an expression of good wishes for the person’s future.

### What Not to Say

- Don’t write anything in letters to employees or prospective employees that could be considered actionable. Common sense will provide some guidance, but in questionable instances, consult an attorney on the phrasing of sensitive letters (reprimands and terminations, for example).
- Don’t express negative emotions. Negative facts may have to be outlined, but your letter remains objective rather than angry, vengeful, irritated, judgmental, hurt, or contemptuous. When you are overly involved emotionally, ask another person to write the letter.

### Tips on Writing

- Be brief. Your memos and letters will be more popular (and more quickly answered) if they are concise. Check your correspondence for words, sentences, and paragraphs that can be cut without loss of clarity.
- Be professional and courteous. Even when writing someone you know well, maintain a businesslike tone. Anything that gets put on paper can be saved and re-read. Although a careless remark can be forgotten, a carelessly written sentence lives forever.

- Use parallel name forms. If you begin a letter, “Dear Hazel Marston” your name at the bottom is “John Reddin.” When she is “Hazel,” you are “John.” If you feel a first name is appropriate after a job interview (“Dear Henry”), sign your first name (“Ferris”) over your typed full name (just as the other person’s name is spelled out in full in the address block).

## Special Situations

- Send goodwill notes of congratulations and commendation to: employees who complete a project, obtain a new account, or otherwise contribute to the good of the company; co-workers and employees who are promoted or receive awards; workers marking service anniversaries; employees, co-workers, and managers celebrating personal milestones (birth of baby, marriage). These notes are the least obligatory and the most influential of office correspondence. Something as brief as “Thanks, Tom. You’re terrific” can inspire people to new heights of accomplishment.

## Format

- Most in-house correspondence consists of memos. More official communications (promotions and resignations, for example) or letters that go in people’s files are typed on letterhead stationery.
- E-mail is useful for brief nuts-and-bolts communications. Nothing confidential or important is sent this way, however.

## WORDS

accomplish- ments	achievement	behavior	capable
competent	conduct	cutback	goals
morale	objectives	operation	outstanding
policies	procedure	process	recognize
regret	regulations	position	success
supervise	training		

## PHRASES

accepted another position

after much deliberation



an opportunity has recently arisen	appreciate having had the opportunity to work
ask you to accept my resignation	cannot presently offer you any encouragement
company cutbacks/merger due to economic conditions	considered for the position of eliminate certain positions
expect to fill the vacancy	financial problems/difficulties have forced/obliged us
have no other option but to must advise/inform you	highly motivated not adding to/expanding our staff at the moment
proposed termination date of under consideration	submit/tender my resignation value your contributions
with great personal regret/great reluctance/mixed feelings	

## SENTENCES

According to the terms of my contract, I hereby give four weeks' notice that as of April 18 I am terminating my employment as freight transportation manager with Sweedlepipe, Inc.

Although your credentials are impressive, we are offering the position to someone who also has the grain futures experience we are looking for.

Because Don Rebura Associates was not awarded the Marryat contract, we are obliged to consider employee layoffs.

I accept with pleasure the offer to join Potticary Dairy Products as institutional services manager.

I am proud to be part of such a creative and enthusiastic team—I hope you are too.

I'll be happy to recommend you highly to potential employers.

I'm concerned about the infractions of our safety regulations.

I'm looking forward to a long and challenging association with Willard Electronics.

I've seen your wonderfully creative and appealing display windows and want to congratulate you on your excellent work.

I would like to meet with you to review the circumstances leading to my termination notice.

On behalf of the management of Steenson Engineering, I am happy to inform

you that you have been promoted to Senior Research Engineer, effective March 1.

Our decision in no way reflects on your excellent qualifications.

Thank you for applying for the position of commercial plant specialist with Calvert Tropical Plants.

The award properly belongs to the entire department.

The position for which you have applied has already been filled.

This is to advise you that you are being laid off in compliance with Article XXXI, Section 6, of our current labor agreement.

This letter will give formal notice of my resignation from Toddhunter Associates as Media Specialist effective April 1.

Unfortunately we are not able to offer you a position with Roehampton, Ltd. at this time.

We accept your resignation with regret, and wish you well in future endeavors.

We are pleased to offer you the position as warehouse attendant for Landor Textiles.

We are sorry to see you leave.

We have received a number of responses to our advertisement, and we ask your patience while we evaluate them.

We hope to be able to consider you for another position soon.

We hope you will be available for recall.

We will let you know / contact you / notify you / be in touch with you / write or call you about the status of your application sometime before June 1.

## PARAGRAPHS

We have carefully considered your letter of application, résumé, and portfolio, and have been most favorably impressed. Please call the Human Resources Office at 555-6790 to arrange an interview with Enoch Emery, the Art Director.

Thank you for offering me the opportunity to work for Wedderburn Printers and Lithographers as manager of bindery services. I am delighted to accept this position with such a distinguished and forward-looking company.

We are seeing more travel expenses turned in after the fact, whereas company policy states that all travel expenses must be preapproved. If you have questions about how to handle travel expenses, call Michael Lambourne in Human Resources, extension 310.

We've received complaints that employee attempts to guard against receiving bad checks have become overly intrusive, hostile, and humili-

ating. Several customers have said they will not return to the store. While we encourage every effort to prevent the writing of bad checks, your actions must be tactful, courteous, and respectful. Please reread your employee handbook for specific acceptable measures and for suggested phrases and actions for handling this situation.

Last month, we lost \$3,780 worth of clothing to shoplifters. There is an informational seminar on shoplifting scheduled for June 16 at 3:00 p.m. In the meantime, we ask all employees to be especially vigilant.

I am obliged to resign my position with the Van Eyck Company because of ill health. I appreciate the good employer-employee relationship we have enjoyed over the years and will be watching the company's growth with much interest. If I can be of any assistance to my successor, I will be glad to help out.

We are sorry to announce that Jeanne Beroldy has resigned from the firm effective July 1. She has accepted the position of Managing Director with Christie Packaging Corp. Although we will miss her, we wish her every success in her exciting new position.

It is with much regret that we advise you that we are unable to continue your employment after September 1. As you are no doubt aware, the company is experiencing severe—but temporary, we hope—difficulties. We believe the layoff will also be temporary, although for the moment it is not possible to promise anything. In the meantime, please check with Personnel for information on letters of reference, company layoff policies, public assistance available to you until you find other employment, and career counseling.

With regret we accept your resignation, effective March 1. You have been one of the company's strongest assets for the past five years. Please accept our best wishes in your new position.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Mr. Karkeek:

Thank you for your letter seeking employment with our firm.

You have an interesting background. However, we feel your qualifications and experience do not match the needs of the account executive/trainee position presently available in our Chicago office.

We thank you for your interest in Lessways International and wish you success in the attainment of your career objectives.

Sincerely yours,

Dear Elizabeth Firminger,

Thank you for applying for the position of insurance adjustor with the Raybrook Adjusting Service. Your work history is outstanding, and you made a good impression at your interview. As you know, however,

we were looking for someone with experience in the inland marine area, and we did find a candidate with that qualification.

We appreciate your interest in our company, and would like to suggest that you re-apply to us in six months when we expect to have several other positions open. We will keep your application on file until then.

It is clear that you will be an asset to the company that eventually hires you—good luck in finding the right place.

Sincerely,

Dear Marguerite Lambert,

Thank you for your application for the position of litho stripper, your résumé, and your work samples. They are being carefully considered by our Human Resources Department.

We received a number of other applications, so it may be three or four weeks before we can make a decision. You will be notified either way as soon as we do.

Thank you for your interest in Greatheart Printing Company.

Sincerely yours,

Dear Ms. Moncada:

As you know, I just celebrated five years with Tresham Paper Products. In that time, I've been stimulated by my work, supported by co-workers, and encouraged by management. I've enjoyed being part of the Tresham team.

The recent reorganization has changed things for me, however, and I question whether the next five years will be as fruitful for me as the last five and whether I'll be as useful to the company in my new situation. Because of this, I am accepting a position with Walter & Co., Inc., where I am assured of opportunities for advancement as well as exceptional laboratory support.

Please accept my resignation, effective November 1, along with my appreciation for a satisfying and rewarding five years.

Sincerely,

TO: All Employees

FROM: Lawrence Mont, Head Librarian

DATE: August 14, 2002

RE: Library usage

As of September 1, all library books will be due one month from the checkout date (the previous loan period was two months). For the first several months, we will be calling this change to your attention as you check out books.

TO: Dr. Betti Lancoch  
FROM: Caradoc Evans  
DATE: February 3, 2003  
RE: Biodegradable plastics technology

We continue to be very interested in your biodegradable plastics technology, which appears to be the cornerstone for several new products. I understand you're pursuing patents for this technology. We'd like to see your patent applications filed by May 1, 2003, so that we could begin customer contact to clarify performance criteria for several of the products.

I want to emphasize our need for your technology along with appropriate patent protection. If you require additional support, please call. Thanks.

See also: ANNOUNCEMENTS, APPOINTMENTS, APPRECIATION, CONGRATULATIONS, COVER LETTERS, FOLLOW-UP, REFERENCES, REFUSALS, RESPONSES, RÉSUMÉS, THANK YOU, WELCOME.

# Letters to Family and Friends

*Do let me hear from you even if it's only a twenty-page letter.*

—GROUCHO MARX

Although inexpensive long-distance dialing has replaced some letters to family and friends, millions are still sent every year. E-mail has probably fueled writing among family and friends like nothing since the pony express.

Start talking about the joy of personal letters and people will tell you about their family round-robin letter, about the grandmother who returned years of correspondence to each of her children and grandchildren, about the couple celebrating their anniversary who read aloud their first letters to each other, about high school friends who saved their letters for twenty-five years.

And there are serious letters: the man whose friends flood him with letters before each chemotherapy appointment; the young woman who chooses her baby's adoptive parents by reading letters written to her from each candidate couple; the weekly letters that are read with such pleasure by a ninety year-old uncle who can no longer hear.

"How eagerly in all times and all places, have people waited for mail from home! How wistfully have they repeated, over and over again, that old familiar question: 'Any mail for me?'" (Lillian Eichler Watson)

## Letters to Family and Friends Include

- annual form letters (see HOLIDAYS)
- correspondence with friends and relatives
- letters to young people: birthdays/congratulations on an achievement/ away from home
- love letters (see LOVE LETTERS)
- pen pals
- special-event letters (see CONGRATULATIONS, HOLIDAYS, SYMPATHY, WEDDINGS)
- welcoming prospective or new in-laws (see also WELCOME)

## How to Say It

- Open with a cheerful remark indicating you're happy to be writing the other person.
- Ask questions about the other person's life, without, however, sounding like an interviewer.
- Write about what you've been doing lately; books you've read; movies or plays you've seen; sports events you've participated in or attended; local or national politics and issues you care about; news of mutual friends; something that made you laugh; an item you just bought; plans for summer, fall, next year; the weather; changes at work; pets' behavior; hobbies or collections. Or, choose a recent event (it needn't be terribly important) and tell it like a story.
- Close with an expression of affection or love and with a forward-looking statement about seeing or hearing from the person.

## What Not to Say

- Don't begin with "I don't know why I'm writing, because I don't have anything to say," or "You know how I hate writing letters" or "I'm sorry for not writing sooner"—unless, of course, you can say it with wit and originality. Start your letter with a cheerful, positive, interesting remark.
- Don't write only questions and comments on the other person's life and last letter ("Your remodeled kitchen sounds fantastic!"; "The new car sounds great." "Your party must have been a lot of fun." "I'll bet you were proud of Cicely."). Mark Van Doren says, "The letter which merely answers another letter is no letter at all." And Sigmund Freud said, "I consider it a good rule for letterwriting to leave unmentioned what the recipient already knows, and instead tell...something new." D. H. Lawrence added, "I love people who can write reams and reams about themselves: it seems generous."
- Don't complain or be negative, unless you can do it entertainingly. A cheerful, positive tone is welcome (except when you or your reader have been facing difficulties).
- Don't end with "I've bored you long enough" or "I'd better quit before you fall asleep." Instead, say how much you'd enjoy hearing from them when time allows or how much you miss them or, again, how happy you are about their news.

## Tips on Writing

- Write when it is a pleasure and not a chore (unless, of course, this is never the case for you). The casual guideline about letters to family

and friends is that short and frequent is better than long and infrequent. However, this is a matter of temperament. The general feeling is that it is delightful to get personal mail at all, and never mind whether it is short and infrequent, or otherwise.

- Remember your writing teacher's advice to "Elaborate! Elaborate!" Instead of merely reporting that you went camping, tell a story or describe something you saw so that the other person can almost see it. Almost any sentence lends itself to some kind of elaboration.

- Include cartoons, newspaper clippings, snapshots, bookmarks, or other materials that are satisfying to receive and make your letter look like more than it is.

- Postcards help you keep in touch when you haven't time for a letter. Keep a stack of colorful, funny, or oldtime postcards near your letterwriting area and get in the habit of sending off a couple a week. This will make you popular and will relieve you of the guilt that unanswered mail produces in most people.

## Special Situations

- One of the best letters to family doesn't even need postage: the notes or drawings put in children's lunchboxes; the note in a traveling spouse's luggage; the letter of congratulations to a hardworking student; the simple "I love you" pinned to a bedspread. These are worth many times their weight in the gold of family harmony.

- When children are in the care of adults other than their parents or guardians, they should have with them a letter authorizing emergency medical help. In the case of summer camps or day-care providers, a form for this purpose is generally provided. But if you leave your children with someone for the weekend, write: "I [name] give permission to [name of person caring for your children] to authorize any necessary medical emergency care for [name of child or children] from [date] to [date]." Sign and date the letter and give a telephone number where you can be reached.

- While it is rarely a good idea to write to unknown individuals who are incarcerated, it is generally a good idea to remember family and friends who are in jail or in prison—and with whom you have a close relationship. They appreciate mail. The first several letters will be awkward, but if you can establish some neutral subjects (books, interests, hobbies, mutual friends, social issues), the letters will become easier to write with time and practice.

- When dealing with strong feelings, letters are effective because they distance people from each other and from the problem while obliging them to think clearly enough to put their thoughts down on paper. However, letters can also worsen a problem. Written words are not as easily forgotten as words spoken in the heat of anger; they



can be reread many times by a grudge-holder. Words without accompanying gestures, smiles, and apologetic looks are colder and more inflexible. Think carefully about the temperament of the person to whom you are writing and determine an approach that the person will be able to “hear”; do not write in the heat of your strongest feelings—that is, it is good to write then, but do not mail it; reread and rewrite your letter several times over a period of days.

- When writing to children: Print or type your letter; it’s easier to read. Include a stimulating, challenging, or curious statement. Relate a bit of trivia, thought problem, word puzzle, anecdote. Children enjoy being let into the adult world; tell them about something important to you—a job problem, your garden, the next election. Share your thoughts, discuss ideas, ask questions. Avoid the word “kids” (“I’m so proud of you kids!”). For their reply to you, enclose a few postcards or a self-addressed envelope with an unattached stamp (so the stamp isn’t wasted if they don’t write back). Or, construct a letter for the child to return to you that consists of boxes to check off with various made-up statements and “news.” This technique will probably net you a letter at least once. Very young children appreciate mail even if they can’t read. Keep in mind that a parent will be reading your letter aloud; things sound different that way. Include a colorful drawing or cut-out picture along with the child’s name (which many youngsters recognize early on), a picture of you, a fancy pencil, a small toy.

- When writing a child who is away from home for the first time, you can say lightly, “We miss you!” but don’t emphasize how empty the house seems; some children feel responsible for their parents’ feelings. Don’t detail what everyone at home is doing; that too can make a child sad. Instead, ask questions that will provide something to write back about: What time do you get up? What do you usually eat for breakfast? Do you have a swimming class? Who else lives in your cabin? Are there any animals there? Have you been in a canoe yet? What is your favorite activity? Who is your counselor? Have you made new friends?

- To help your children become letterwriters: see that they receive mail themselves; supply them with small sheets of wide-lined paper and interesting pens; sit with them during the writing of their first two dozen brief notes—being with you is part of the fun; make the writing of a thank-you note a requirement for using the gift or spending the money, but let them do it at their own pace and, whenever possible, make a mini-party out of it, writing thank-you notes of your own at the same time.

- Although the term “pen pal” suggests youthful letterwriters, it includes not only dedicated young correspondents but thousands of adults who write with great enthusiasm to people they’ve never met. A better term might be “pen friend.” In the beginning, be discreet about giving personal information; start with facts that most people

know about you and reserve more private details for later in the correspondence. The main “rule” for pen friends is to be yourself. Where one person is put off by a ten-page letter from a new correspondent, another person is delighted. The person who talks only about self-centered news fascinates one person, bores the next. The letterwriter who never tells anything personal is considered discreet by some, too uptight by others. When you are being yourself you’ll find those who like you just as you are. To find a pen pal, contact one of the following organizations. International Pen Friends, based in Dublin, Ireland, has members of all ages; send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: International Pen Friends, Box 290065, Brooklyn, NY 11229-0001. Young people (ages twelve to twenty) who want to write a foreign pen pal can contact World Pen Pals, International Institute of Minnesota, 1690 Como Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108. Also for young letter-writers are: The Student Letter Exchange, Box 2465, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163, and The International Friendship League, 55 Mount Vernon Street, Boston, MA 02108. Some organizations charge fees.

## Format

- Letters to family and friends can use any format you like. Acquaintances are a little different; the less well you know a person, the more formal (personal stationery, handwritten) the letter or note will be.

## WORDS

activities	affectionately	announce	busy
events	friendship	funny	goings-on
happy	healthy	news	pleased
proud	recently	satisfying	tell
vacation	weather		

## PHRASES

a warm hello	did you know
good to hear from you	have you ever thought about
have you heard	how did you manage to
I enjoyed hearing about	I hope that by now
I meant to tell you	in your last letter you didn’t mention

I thought you might like to know	missing you
remember the time	sympathize with
thinking of you	we were so happy to hear that
we wondered if	what did you think of
whatever happened to	what would you say to
when are you going to	

## SENTENCES

Are you planning to travel this summer?  
 Have you read any good books lately?  
 I can't tell you how much I appreciated your letter.  
 I'll be counting the minutes till I see you.  
 I'm wondering how your finals went.  
 I think of you every day/so often.  
 I've never written to anyone I didn't know before, so let's see how this goes!  
 I was so glad to see your handwriting again.  
 Please write and tell me all the news.  
 We'd love to see pictures of the new house.  
 We thoroughly enjoy your letters—you can't write often enough for us.  
 What a dear letter!  
 Write when you have time, will you?  
 You must send the quickest of moral support notes to me because I'm having  
 an absolutely dreadful time at the office.  
 You're in my thoughts every minute of the day.  
 Your last letter was priceless/delightful/a pleasure to receive.  
 Your letters always brighten my day.  
 Your letter was such fun to read—thanks!

## PARAGRAPHS

Hello! My name is Henry Earlforward and in addition to being your new pen friend I'm a bookseller by vocation and a bibliophile by avocation. I hope you like books as much as I do.

I can hardly wait for summer to get here. What's that you say? Summer has come and gone? The kids are back in school? But...but...I really don't know where the time goes.

Please say hello to everyone and tell Audrey thanks again for taking

us out. We had a great time! Your family is so warm and fun to be around—so much energy and self-assurance! I miss you all!

I'm sorry about this one-size-fits-all letter, but my negligence in corresponding with all of you finally got so oppressive that I had to take immediate steps. These immediate steps have taken me almost three weeks. Meanwhile, my brand-new personal computer was crying out, "Use me! Use me!" Then...Eureka! Hoover!...this letter was conceived and executed.

Will wonders never cease? Hannah is finally sprouting some teeth—believe it or don't. I mean she's only seventeen months old! I was beginning to wonder if kids need teeth to get into first grade. Well, those teeth may have been slow in coming but at least they brought out the monster in her for four months. Actually she's been pretty good considering how sore her mouth must be.

This evening we're having our first interview with a private adoption agency—at home, in my natural habitat. Next week we start paying them money and attend a two-day workshop. Then the following week there's another two-day workshop, then more interviews—all this to complete a home study. After that the search begins and could take anywhere from one day to eighteen months. It makes me nervous in the service because it's such a big step, but I think we're ready for it. Keep us in your thoughts!

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Angela and Tom,

Parlez-vous français? That means "Sorry I haven't written lately." It all started when I ran out of lined paper at my office. I hate trying to write on this blank stuff, it's like trying to drive on a snow-covered road, only a little safer.

So how's the world treating you these days? We are winding down from another busy summer and hoping for a beautiful and serene fall. Whoever coined the phrase "lazy days of summer" ought to have their vital signs checked. I mean, who are we kidding here?

Both Kalli and Lauren are taking a gymnastics class, so we spend a lot of after-dinner time in the yard practicing what they are learning, with me as their "equipment." But it's fun, at least until the mosquitoes begin setting up their derricks.

I had a busy summer at the office, but September is slow as usual. The kids are back in school, the farmers are busy, and bow-hunting season is here. It's actually a nice pace although hard on the budget. I think I would enjoy dentistry a lot more if I didn't have to make money at it.

I'm manager of our softball team this season. It's one of those things that doesn't sound like much, and shouldn't be, but is. I'd rate it about a 9.8 on the headache scale (of 10). We are winning at 11-3 and tied for

first in our twelve-team league, but, honestly, the manager has nothing to do with that. Now if we were losing, then it would be my fault. The hardest part is collecting money from people for various things and making a lot of phone calls.

Well, that's all for now. Say hello to the kids for me.

With love,

Dear Mrs. K.,

It was so nice to hear from you. I wish we could have had a longer visit at Easter. This semester has gone by so quickly—there are only three weeks left. Maybe we can get together when I come home for the summer.

I know you don't watch TV, so I'll tell you what Oprah Winfrey said. The average cost of a wedding is \$13,000. Can you believe that? Mom tried to break the news to Daddy. He guessed the average wedding cost was \$700 to \$1,000. Poor Daddy.

Because there *is* going to be a wedding! We think next year. Can you believe I've written a whole page and haven't mentioned the love of my life? Jeff is fine, and sends his love too.

With a hug,

Subj: Just keepin' in touch  
Date: 04-05-05 13:43:52 EDT  
From: md@email.com  
To: rm@email.com

Hi mom. Of course I'm alive. Had you doubts? I hardly think that three days without hearing from me justifies using capital letters.

Dear Fritz,

And how is my favorite uncle? Your letter came the other day and it was one of the nicest I've gotten in a long time. It was great seeing you over Christmas break.

Baseball is now in full swing (get it?), and we're running sprints every morning by 6:00 a.m. By 10:00 we're hitting off the machine. I can't wait for the weather to clear up so we can go outside to do all this.

Tell everybody "Hi" for me, and if Liz has any questions about college, she can write me. I can't answer them all but tell her the first quarter of the first year is the toughest, and it's all downhill after that!

Love,

Dear Lettie,

We all enjoyed your last letter, and have taped the cartoons up on the refrigerator.

Somewhere I read that life, to a five-year-old, is full of alternatives.

Tommy is forever asking, “Mommy, would you rather have me get eaten by an alligator, bonked on the head, or fall out of a skyscraper window?”

I went bargain hunting at some rummage sales last weekend. I guess you could say I got my limit. The Lamberts were here for two days along with their poodle, Muffy (French for “lint ball,” isn’t it?).

I bought a generic fruit punch that says one of its ingredients is “natural punch flavoring.” What is a punch? I assume it grows on trees, and I’m guessing it needs a warm climate.

We’re having a party Friday night—twenty-two people. It’s been the best way I’ve discovered to get the spring cleaning done.

This letter is more disjointed than most. I guess I don’t try often enough to harness a thought, and now that I’m trying, my fingers are too weak to hold the reins. You like my metaphor? I ought to be a writer.

Give my love to everyone!

Subj: Friday morning  
Date: 96-02-23 13:24:46 EST  
From: mdk@email.com  
To: rmk@email.com

I will medley for you when I plane in to the Cities. Who’s going to car me home from the airport? I’m going to go CD now.

Dear Wu Sung,

This is my first experiment with writing to someone I’ve never met. It’s a good thing that you speak (and write) English or this wouldn’t be possible. Unfortunately I don’t speak any other languages, not even Spanish, which I took for two years in high school.

To help us get to know each other, I’m sending you a few things that show my little corner of the world: a road map, postcards, a small travel book about Chicago, some pages from this morning’s newspaper that tell what’s going on in Chicago these days, and some pictures of my family, my apartment, and our cat, Mulch.

I work in a bank, so in my next letter I’ll send a picture of the bank, some brochures describing its features, and tell you a little about what I do there.

I look forward to hearing about you and your corner of the world!

Dear Christopher,

Congratulations on doing such a good job on your term paper. I read it through twice and learned so much. I’m not surprised you got an A+ on it. I especially liked the way you paced yourself on this long drawn-out project. I remember you starting your note cards back in February, and then working on it steadily all spring. I’m impressed!

Love,

Mom

See also: ADVICE, ANNIVERSARIES, APOLOGIES, CONGRATULATIONS, "GET WELL," HOLIDAYS, LOVE LETTERS, SYMPATHY, THANK YOU, WEDDINGS, WELCOME.

# Faxed Letters

*With the only certainty in our daily existence being change, and a rate of change growing always faster in a kind of technological leapfrog game, speed helps people think they are keeping up.*

—GAIL SHEEHY

The fax (short for facsimile machine) has become indispensable to many individuals and businesses, increasing the speed of communication and changing our idea of “response time” from days to minutes. It scans letters, converts the words and graphics to signals that can be sent over telephone lines, and transmits them to a machine at the other end, where the process is reversed. Like a photocopying machine, it works only with already prepared documents.

A letter sent by fax is like any other letter. However, once it’s been typed or printed and signed, it’s inserted in the fax machine. No folding it, addressing an envelope, putting the letter in the envelope, sealing it, stamping it—and waiting several days for it to reach your addressee. The appeal is obvious.

However, the virtue of the faxed page is its speed, not its good looks. Some fax paper is not appealing aesthetically. The print can be blurry or smudged or at times illegible, depending on the quality of the original document and the machines used to transmit it.

## Fax Letters When

- communicating overseas
- someone is difficult to reach by phone
- speed is the principal factor
- the appearance of the document is not an issue
- you’ve been requested to

## How to Say It

- Determine whether faxing is indicated. If you and your addressee agree you need a speedy transfer of data or information, it is the best choice.



- Write your letter as carefully as you would if you were putting it in an envelope and sending it by mail.
- Include on a cover sheet or the first page of your fax: the recipient's name, department, and fax number; your name along with information on how to contact you (fax number, e-mail address, company name and address, phone number); the number of pages being faxed (include the cover sheet in your count).

### What Not to Say

- Don't send thank-you letters by fax unless you know the other person well; doing it this way parcels out the cost of the thank you between sender and recipient. It's also not very heartwarming.
- Don't send confidential or sensitive information by fax, unless you're certain your intended recipient will collect it on the other end. Anyone can read your letter while the fax machine is printing it or while it waits to be picked up by your recipient. Ads may say, "Please fax confidential résumé," but it is better to assume that confidentiality is not absolute.

### Tips on Writing

- Handwritten letters or notes don't make satisfactory faxes; printed copy is the norm.
  - Use a readable font. A 10-point size is the minimum; 12-point is better.
  - When the page being faxed is important, send the fax for instant reception but mail the hard copy at the same time so the other person has a decent-looking original. (You may want to note at the bottom of the letter that this is a confirmation of a fax sent on such-and-such a date.)
  - Read over faxes before sending; they can constitute legally binding documents.
  - Don't fax something that has been faxed several times; each transmission reduces its sharpness, making it hard to read and unappealing. Any fax that looks a little fuzzy when you get it is going to look worse after you send it on. To see what your letter will look like when faxed to the recipient, run it through your fax machine on copy mode. The result is about what they'll get.
  - When faxing letters or documents with small, dense print, adjust your resolution to "superfine." The document will be easier to read and the transmittal time will be increased only slightly.
  - Keep in mind that the fax machine reads everything. Heavy fonts, graphics, borders, icons all increase transmission time and, on the other end, gobble up ink.

- If you rely heavily on the fax machine, it is thrifty and efficient to design letterhead stationery that will accommodate information needed for faxing. Experiment with different ink colors, letterheads, fonts, and logos in order to find the ones that look best after being faxed. You can then do away with the cover page, saving yourself and your recipient time, paper, and phone costs.

- For fine-tuning your faxed letters, see Audrey Glassman's *Can I Fax a Thank-You Note?*

## Special Situations

- Faxing is useful for correspondence with people in other time zones. Many foreign hotels now routinely request that reservations be made by fax. Faxes have all the immediacy of a telephone call but are less expensive.

- Faxes are being used for sending routine information quickly: receiving/confirming/changing orders, invoices, shipping information, specifications, quotes, and corrections to contracts or proposals in process. When faxes are legible, this has proved to be convenient and cost-effective.

- Faxing has made possible long-distance business transactions where documents are sent to someone to be signed or initialed and faxed back. In many cases an original signature is eventually needed, but this allows the transaction to proceed in a timely manner.

- Faxing unrequested sales messages is not appreciated. Theoretically someone could fax a sales letter to all the fax numbers they find. However, this means recipients pay to receive something they didn't request. Although most of us have learned to live with unsolicited third-class mail, we would not be pleased to have to pay to receive it. Because it costs the recipient to receive a fax, be sure the person welcomes it.

- Faxing résumés and application letters has become acceptable to many companies and actively solicited by others. Faxing a résumé or letter of application in such cases is appropriate and probably necessary since other applicants will be faxing theirs. However, at this stage in the technology of fax machines, your résumé won't look as professional as a mailed original.

- Faxes can be sent to anyone who has a fax machine—and to anyone who doesn't. People without a machine of their own send and receive faxes at photocopy centers. To send, bring in the letter or pages to be faxed while you wait. Don't take stapled items; this annoys copy shop personnel since pages are sent one at a time. To receive, notify your correspondent of the store's fax number and advise them to put your name and phone number at the top of the fax so the store can call you when it arrives.

## Format

- A faxed letter uses standard letterhead or memo stationery.
- Small preprinted fax information forms are available to stick onto the first page of your letter or memo, thus making the cover sheet unnecessary. This only works, however, when there's room on the page for the form.

## WORDS

attached	confirm	correction	following
forward	immediately	instructions	prompt
quickly	request	rush	send
speedy	transmittal	urgent	

## PHRASES

additional instructions	as soon as possible
as you requested/at your request	because of the tight deadline
by return fax	by this afternoon
happy to be able to send	I need a response by
pass along	please acknowledge receipt
price quotation	prompt reply
the information you requested	to advise you
to speed your application	transmittal problems
via facsimile transmission and U.S. mail	

## SENTENCES

Below are the figures you need for the meeting this afternoon.

Here is the missing paragraph for my newsletter piece.

I authorize you to debit my credit card in the amount of \$4000 (card number, signature, and date below).

I'd appreciate a call at 555-4234 when you receive this.

I'm sorry about the rush, but I'd appreciate it if you could look over this press release and let me know by noon if it's all right with you.

In response to your ad for an estimator at your headquarters office, I am faxing you my résumé.

Let me know if you have any problems reading this.

Please have the current owners and the buyers sign below to indicate that they have received this disclosure, and then fax it back to this office.

Please read and initial the attached rider to your contract # 007945.

This will confirm the arrangements for delivery of order # C18803 made on the telephone this morning.

We were ready to starting printing when Itzik Landsman pointed out that these figures don't make sense—will you check them and get back to us right away?

You may use this form to respond.

Your Peterkin Turkeys will be delivered today between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.

Please check the delivery against the attached order, sign to acknowledge receipt, and return the signed order form to us.

## PARAGRAPHS

Your good faith estimate of closing costs is attached. Please read it and call me with any questions. I'd like to get a final copy typed up this afternoon. Thanks.

Bettina Vanderpoel has provided us with the necessary figures and documents. Please check the attached statement for errors or inconsistencies and fax it back with your corrections as soon as you can. Before 3:00 today would be helpful. Thanks!

O.A. Pardiggle Termite, Inc. Wood destroying pests and organisms inspection report for 1711 Grismer # 6. Please read, sign, and return ASAP.

Can you let us know by this afternoon if you can supply us with one hundred (100) pool-testing kits from stock? We need them immediately. Is there a possibility of one-or two-day delivery? I assume this purchase would fall under your bulk-rate (10%) discount.

I'm faxing both you and your lawyer a copy of the revised contract. If you leave a message on my voice mail or fax me back with an okay, I can overnight the original copies of the contract to you for your signature first thing Monday morning. I'm looking forward to working with you.

Please complete the attached Uniform Commercial Loan Application, responding to all fields marked with an X. Sign and return by 9/23.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

TO: William Marling, Manager

FAX: 715/555-2033  
FROM: Lettice Watson  
TELEPHONE/FAX: 715/555-4355  
PAGES FAXED: 2

I've just learned that you have an immediate opening for a sales associate in your casino products store.

As indicated on the résumé on the next page, I've worked in sales for the past four years.

I would like to set up an appointment to discuss this position with you.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Dr. Grimesby Roylott  
Fax # 818/555-3232  
February 7, 2001

Dear Dr. Roylott,

I'm working on the brochure for our next conference on plastic and reconstructive surgery and I don't have a professional bio for you. Will you fax us one (about a paragraph in length) as soon as possible? Thanks. Our fax number is 616/555-4687.

FROM: Valentine Wannop  
Security Systems  
Fax # 212/555-1443

TO: Christopher Tietjens  
Fax # 212/555-4877

PAGES SENT: 2

Chris, I need to turn in the attached meeting announcement this afternoon. Is everything correct? Thanks. Val

TO: Customer Service, Vesson Jewelers  
FROM: Mary Webb  
DATE: August 12, 2003  
RE: Order # 189441, catalog item # 43A-8215  
PAGES SENT: 2

The second sheet of this fax is the page from your catalog that shows the wristwatch I recently ordered. Although the catalog number agrees with the catalog number of the watch I received, the watch itself bears no resemblance to the one pictured. Instead it matches the description of your catalog item # 431-8255. I need this watch for a birthday gift

on August 16. Please send instructions immediately on how to rectify the situation before then. Thank you.

TO: Lambert Strether  
Strether Medical Supply  
Fax 612/555-2566  
FROM: Chadwick Newsome  
Newsome Mfg. Co., Inc.  
Fax 715/555-2534  
RE: Order # LSX-655-12211  
DATE: Oct. 12, 2002

The above-referenced shipment should have arrived before noon today and did not. Are we scheduled to receive it this afternoon? Let me know. We were assured we would have it today. Thanks.

See also: MEMOS.

# Follow-Up Letters

*Bulldogs have been known to fall on their swords  
when confronted by my superior tenacity.*

—MARGARET HALSEY

Writing a follow-up letter on the heels of an earlier letter, conversation, or meeting is a graceful way of tying up a loose end, reminding someone to carry through on a promised action, or building on something that went before. Sometimes you need to write several follow-up letters. Combine your bulldog tenacity with charm and originality, and you will achieve your goal.

Letitia Baldrige, the New York writer of etiquette books and former White House social secretary, encourages following up meetings and lunches with letters. “This little personal touch, which takes three minutes, makes an enormous impression,” she says. “The ones who do it regularly in business are such standouts. They’re the ones who jump ahead.”

## Write a Follow-Up Letter to

- amplify material in your original sales letter after it brings a response (order, expression of interest, request for more information)
- confirm a meeting date, a telephone or other oral agreement, a message left with a third party
- express appreciation and acknowledge what was accomplished at a business lunch, dinner, or meeting
- express appreciation and the hopes that they are interested to someone who has visited your school, university, college, or organization as an applicant
- express your appreciation and impressions after a visit to a school, university, or college or after attending a meeting as a guest or potential member
- inquire whether your unacknowledged gift arrived
- reinforce sales visits or demonstrations
- remind someone of an appointment, meeting, favor, request, inquiry, invitation, payment, or work deadline

- remind someone that you are waiting for answers, information, confirmation, or merchandise that you wrote about earlier
- send omitted or supplemental material or to revise an earlier correspondence
- someone who has not responded to a sales letter or product literature
- someone who hasn't returned your telephone call
- sum up what was accomplished in a meeting or interview so that there is a record and so that your view of what went on can be verified by others
- thank someone for a job interview
- verify with a customer that a shipping problem or missing order has been settled to their satisfaction

### **How to Say It**

- State why you are writing ("I haven't heard from you"; "I wanted to remind you").
- Refer to the key idea (the meeting, your last letter, the unacknowledged gift).
- Thank the person for the interest shown or tie your purpose in writing to your last contact with them. If necessary, remind the person who you are ("We met last week at the performance boats trade show") or what your telephone discussion was about.
- Tell what you want the person to do: acknowledge receipt of merchandise, telephone you, send payment, reply to an earlier letter.
- Close with an expression of appreciation for the person's time and attention, or with a forward-looking statement about further business or contacts.

### **What Not to Say**

- Don't imply your reader is thoughtless or negligent when writing about an unanswered letter or unacknowledged gift. Although the possibility of mail going astray is slim, you must allow for it. Even if the recipient is at fault, it is neither good manners nor good business to point this out.
- A follow-up letter should not simply repeat earlier information (except in the case of confirming an oral agreement or discussion). You need an identifiable reason for writing, such as sending new information, requesting a response, making a special offer, thanking for a previous order or meeting.



## Tips on Writing

- When writing a follow-up letter to an unanswered request, query, or letter, repeat your original message (or include a copy of it). Go into a little more detail on the importance of the person's response.
- Some offices maintain a tickler file. When sending a letter (inviting someone to speak at the awards banquet, for example), make a note on the calendar a week or two later to verify that you've heard from the person. Letters awaiting responses can be kept together, arranged by the date when a follow-up letter should be sent.
- When sending a follow-up letter to an unacknowledged statement or invoice, include the necessary information (amount, account number, date due, days past due) with a simple notice, "A brief reminder." This is often all it takes since some late payments are oversights. (If this letter brings no response, see COLLECTION.)

## Special Situations

- After interviewing for a job, send a follow-up letter immediately, before a decision has been reached. "A follow-up letter after a job interview can often be the extra push that gets you the job." (Harold E. Meyer) State that you enjoyed the interview and restate your abilities and your interest in the position. Emphasize a particular strong point. If there were any misunderstandings or any points you failed to clarify during the interview, you can remedy the situation in this letter. Close with your thanks and a courtesy such as "I look forward to hearing from you."
- If, following an interview, you are not offered the position, write a follow-up letter anyway. Thank the person for their time, tactfully express your disappointment, ask that they keep your résumé on file, and close with an appreciation of the person and the company.
- When someone fails to acknowledge your gift, write a follow-up letter (about eight weeks after sending the gift). Describe the gift. Business gifts are often opened by staff rather than by the intended recipient and wedding gifts can be easily misidentified. Adopt a neutral tone, emphasizing your concern about receipt of the gift rather than negligence in acknowledging it.
- When a meeting or event has been scheduled months in advance, it's helpful to send follow-up notes reminding people. Repeat all the information along with a pleasant remark about hoping to see them.
- Follow-up sales letters are essential. Write promptly, while the customer is still thinking about the presentation, earlier sales message, or visit from a sales representative. Write after a customer requests a brochure, stops by your booth at a trade fair, calls with a question, or responds to an ad. Follow-up letters are also sent when you receive

no response to a sales letter. Refer to the earlier contact (“I wrote you several weeks ago to tell you about...” or “Did you receive the certificate we sent you, good for...?”), thank the person for their interest or the time they gave you, add something new to the overall message, emphasize the one or two features the person seemed most taken with during your presentation, reinforce your original strong selling points, and suggest an action: place an order, call you, call a toll-free number, accept a trial subscription, use the enclosed discount offer. If this is a second letter, emphasize a different benefit or aspect of your product or service. This letter is also shorter or longer than the first and perhaps different in tone. Although all these can be called follow-up letters, they are primarily sales letters.

- Successful businesses keep in touch with customers after they purchase products or services, sending follow-up letters to see how things are working out, to inform customers of new product lines, to remind them that you appreciated their business in the past and hope to serve them again.

- After a meeting or conference call, write a follow-up letter to the other participants. Outline the issues discussed and decisions made in order to provide a written record of what was said. In *The 100 Most Difficult Business Letters You’ll Ever Have to Write, Fax, or E-mail*, Bernard Heller recommends writing a follow-up letter or memo when you want to be certain the ideas you contributed in a meeting are credited to you. He suggests saying that you’ve had some further thoughts on the ideas you submitted and that you think it’s a good idea to get all of them down on paper; “This is the gist of the ideas I offered. A detailed explanation of each one is on the pages that follow.” Patricia King (*Never Work for a Jerk!*) suggests giving a written summary of meetings and conferences to your boss and keeping one in your own file.

## Format

- Most business follow-up letters are typed on letterhead or memo stationery. Social letters or brief reminder-type notes can be handwritten.

- Although not widely used, “to remind” cards can be sent to follow up a telephone invitation. Handwrite the information in regular invitation format on printed cards, foldovers, or personal stationery: “This is to remind you that Mr. and Mrs. Louis Rony expect you on...”

## WORDS

acknowledge

confirm

feedback

inform

mention	notify	prompt	remember
remind	repeat	reply	response
review	suggest	summarize	

## PHRASES

about a month ago, we sent you/wrote you about	a little/brief reminder
am writing to remind you that	appreciate your interest in
as I have not heard from you	as I mentioned on the phone this morning
as mentioned in your letter	as we agreed yesterday
beginning to wonder if you received	I am still interested in
if you want further documentation on	I know how busy you are, so
in reference/reply/response to	jog your memory
just a note to remind you	make sure you're aware of
now that you've had time to consider/review/familiarize yourself with	prompt you to
since we haven't heard from you	thank you for your letter telling us about
thought you might like to be reminded	

## SENTENCES

After visiting with you at the textile trade convention last week, I telephoned Yvonne Dorm, our representative in your area, and asked her to call on you.

Did you receive the Blake River catalog and discounted price list that you requested?

I am writing to follow up on our conversation about the three-party agreement among Clara Hittaway, Amelia Fawn, and Georgiana Fawn.

I appreciate the time you gave me last week to demonstrate our unique Lammeter Integrated Phone Service System.

I enjoyed visiting with you last week when you stopped in to pick up some brochures at Spina Travel Consultants.

If you did not receive my materials, I would be happy to send you another set.

I'm wondering if you received my telephone message last week.

It occurred to me that I haven't received confirmation that you received the report mailed on June 4—could you let me know on the enclosed, self-addressed postcard?

It's so unlike you not to have responded that I suspect you didn't receive the wedding invitation.

I wanted to follow up on our phone conversation of yesterday.

I wanted to make sure you're aware of the service warranty on your new microwave.

Just a note to see if you received the message I left for you Friday.

Now that you have had a chance to tour the proposed site, I'd like to set a date to discuss our options.

On February 7, I sent a questionnaire to you on the departmental reorganization.

Reminder: staff meeting 3:30 p.m. Thursday in the teachers' lounge.

Thank you for letting me help you with the purchase of your new home, which I hope you are enjoying—I'm enclosing my business card in case I can be of further service to you or to anyone you know.

Thank you for taking the time this morning to describe the media buyer position, to show me around the complex, and to introduce me to other members of your staff.

## PARAGRAPHS

I was delighted to meet with you at your home and hear your thoughts about our community. The best part of running for the Bonville City Council is the opportunity to talk with neighbors like you about our future. Please call my office with your concerns, and remember to vote on November 7!

On October 26, I submitted to you a letter of application in response to your advertisement for a moldmaker. I hope you have not yet filled the position and that you are considering my application. Could you please let me know where you are in this process? Thank you.

I'm looking forward to having dinner with you Friday evening. I'll be waiting in the lobby of the Rosalba Hotel at 7:00 p.m. See you then!

Several weeks ago we sent you a packet of informational materials on Topaz Island Resort. Now that you've had a chance to look over the color photographs of our unique vacation paradise, would you like to reserve vacation time in one of the ultra-modern cabins? Our spaces fill up quickly after the first of the year, so make your choice soon!

Thank you for the courtesy and interest you showed me yesterday when I stopped in to inquire about the opening for a child care advocate. I didn't expect to do more than pick up an application form, so it was a pleasure to discuss the job with you. As you could probably tell from our conversation, I am very interested in the position and believe I am well qualified for it. I'll have my references and résumé in the mail to you by the end of the week.

As you know, the Norrington Trolley and Lunch Tour will begin its expanded summer schedule on June 2. Please let me know if we are on schedule to have the new seat covers installed by the May 25 date we agreed on. Thank you.

I know you've been especially busy these last few weeks trying to settle into your new home, but I'd like to make sure that you received a package I mailed you a month ago. It was a housewarming gift, of course. I did insure it, so if it's lost I can have a tracer put on it. Do let me know, won't you, if it hasn't shown up?

## SAMPLE LETTERS

TO: Johannes Rohn  
 FROM: Oren Cornell  
 DATE: February 10, 2003

We have not yet received your year-end report. I'm enclosing a copy of my original letter and another copy of the report form. Please complete it and turn it in as soon as possible. We now have all the evaluations but yours, and need to process them before the winter recess.

Dear Ms. Collen:

We hope you are as pleased with your Safe-Home Security System as we were pleased to install it for you. Let us know if you experience any problems in these first few months. Very few of our customers do, but we're available if anything should come up.

You did not choose to purchase our Monthly Inspection Service at this time. However, if you change your mind, we can easily arrange it for you.

It was a pleasure doing business with you!

Sincerely yours,

Dear Mr. Ayrton,

Just a note to remind you that I still haven't received my copy of the Brodie contract. It's probably in the mail, but with December being such a busy month, I thought I'd mention it.

Sincerely,

Dear Julia Avery:

I'm wondering if you received my letter of January 14 asking you to speak at the Society of Professional Engineers meeting to be held May 3. We are still interested in having you present your recent work to the group.

If you did not receive my letter or if you would like additional information, please call me collect at 612/555-6613. We expect to send the program to the printers by the end of the month.

Sincerely yours,

Dear Ms. Edelman:

On September 16, I sent you my résumé and reprints of several articles I have authored in response to your classified ad for a career services specialist.

As I have had no response, I wonder if you received my materials. Enclosed is a self-addressed stamped postcard. Would you please indicate whether my materials were received by you and, if not, if you are still interested in seeing them?

Thank you.

Sincerely,

See also: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, APPRECIATION, CREDIT, EMPLOYMENT, RESPONSES, SALES, THANK YOU.

# Fundraising Letters

*In the end, raising money is basically a matter of going out there and asking. There are no shortcuts.*

—GEORGETTE MOSBACHER

Intense and growing competition for the charitable dollar means that your fundraising letter has to pack the maximum of persuasion and appeal in the minimum of words. In the average home mailbox, fundraising appeals will outnumber every kind of letter except sales letters. How do you convince readers to set *your* letter aside for a contribution?

It helps if you are writing on behalf of a long-established organization with a good reputation. Beyond that, your best strategy is vigorous writing: compelling anecdotes, easily grasped and persuasive statistics, thought-provoking metaphors, testimonials from familiar public figures, dynamic verbs, and well-worded appeals to heart and purse. One way of learning to write strong fundraising letters is to study effective sales letters.

## Fundraising Letters Include

- asking for volunteers to help fundraise
- follow-up letters after initial appeal (see FOLLOW-UP)
- invitations: benefits/balls/banquets/fundraising events
- political campaign fundraising
- requests for contributions
- responses to fundraising letters (see ACCEPTANCES, REFUSALS, RESPONSES)
- thanks for contributing (see THANK YOU)

## How to Say It

- Excite the reader's interest with an attention-getting opening.
- Clearly identify the organization.
- Describe the organization quickly and colorfully enough to retain the reader's interest: what it does and for whom, how it is unique, what its most impressive achievements are.

- Establish a compelling and urgent need for the reader's help.
- Appeal to the heart by the use of anecdotes, quotations, testimonials, case histories, descriptions.
- Appeal to the head by use of facts, statistics, information.
- Tell specifically how the person's contribution will be used ("With your help, we want to offer college scholarships to an additional twenty students this year").
- Mention the benefits of contributing (personal satisfaction, alleviation of suffering, improving the community, bettering someone's prospects, offering a tax deduction, providing entry to a select group of givers, resulting in recognition or publicity, allowing them to share some of their surplus, responding to a cause they believe in).
- Establish the credibility of the organization and assure readers that their contributions will be used effectively.
- Thank readers for their interest, attention, time, concern.
- Make it easy to give by including a postage-paid reply envelope or a toll-free number where contributions can be made by credit card.
- Have the letter signed by the highest-ranking member of your organization or by a well-known public figure.
- Add a postscript emphasizing a new or strong point.

### What Not to Say

- Don't ask questions or suggest that your reader think about something. Build from one strong message to another without interrupting your sequence to give the reader a chance to reflect, "argue back," or rationalize.
- Don't allow a subtly harassing or moralizing tone to creep into your letter. People who feel strongly about a cause often think others "should" contribute, and this attitude colors their message. Potential contributors cannot be shamed or manipulated into giving; they prefer to believe their contribution is a free-will offering springing from their own higher impulses, not from your pressure.
- Don't use clichés if you can help it: "We need your help"; "Why read this letter?"; "You don't know me, but..."; "Send your check today!"; "Please take a few minutes to read this letter." You can distinguish clichés only by reading hundreds of fundraising letters, but it is worthwhile to do so to see what works and what doesn't.
- Don't use gimmicks such as unusual typefaces, extensive underlining or capitalization, colorful inks, or odd page layouts. A strong message is key, and gimmicks will not help a weak one and will undercut a strong one. Fundraising appeals today, however, are using strategies such as what appears to be a handwritten note on the envelope, a smaller enclosed letter, or an incentive that is either enclosed or offered.



## Tips on Writing

- Be positive. Rather than describe how bad the situation will be if the reader doesn't contribute, describe how much improved the situation will be if the reader does contribute.
- Be specific. Your support evidence is specific (instead of "Every night in this country children go to bed hungry," write, "Every night in this, the richest country in the world, one child in four goes to bed hungry"). Make a specific request ("Please send a check today") or ask for a specific amount ("Your \$100 will plant four new trees").
- Be as brief as possible. You have only seconds to make an impact.
- Convey a sense of urgency. The reader must not only give, but give *now*. The letter that gets set aside to be dealt with later often doesn't get dealt with at all. Ask for an immediate response and include at least one good reason for doing so.
- Establish a bond between you and your reader or between your organization and the reader ("As a parent/teacher/physician, you understand what it means to...").
- Herschell Gordon Lewis, author of *How to Write Powerful Fund Raising Letters*, says, "The strongest word in fundraising is 'you.'" Check your letter to see which occurs more often: "you" or "we" (or "I").
- Divide your message into two parts. First, give the reader a vivid picture of what is possible: healthy, well-nourished children; an active community center; eradication of a disease; a new library. Second, tell the reader exactly how you plan to arrive at the previously painted picture. Your vision statement has an emotional, subjective appeal; your mission statement is factual and objective.
- A fundraising letter can begin by asking the reader to take some action (sign a petition, call a legislator, vote on an issue, participate in a letter-writing campaign) and then later in the letter ask for a contribution as well.
- Most serious contributors are interested in how organizations use their money. Enclose an annual report or fact sheet telling what percentage of funds go to administrative costs and what is spent on the organization's main activities. Credibility and accountability are serious issues for fundraisers.
- The P.S. is more likely to be read than any other part of your letter, and letters with a P.S. have higher response rates than those without. The attention-getting P.S. is brief (less than five lines) and urges the person to take action immediately, expresses appreciation for the person's help and interest, or adds one more persuasive bit of information. More is not better in this case; two postscripts are weaker than one.
- A series of fundraising letters, each with a different emphasis, is

often effective because when one angle doesn't rouse an individual, another might.

## Special Situations

- When inviting people to benefits and fundraising events, use the appropriate invitation form (see INVITATIONS), but be clear about what is expected of those who accept (“\$100 donation suggested” or “Tax-deductible contribution of \$500 per couple suggested”). Your wording may be limited by the allowable meanings of “tax deductible” and “donation.”
- When writing to ask someone to be part of a fundraising committee, spell out exactly what you expect of the person as well as a description of the fundraising efforts and the overall campaign goals (financial and publicity).

## Format

- The vast majority of fundraising letters are form letters. Although one might not expect people to respond to a generic request, these letters do in fact raise large sums for their organizations. Well-written form letters are not only acceptable but effective. The audience you target with this form letter is important to your success, however. Direct mail solicitation will be less effective than letters directed to members of specific groups or personal letters written to individuals.
- Personal letters of appeal on business letterhead are effective but questionable. They should be written only with the express approval of your employer.
- Fundraising letters are not sent by e-mail or fax.

## WORDS

advocate	aid	appeal	ask
assistance	auspices	backing	befriend
benefactor	benefit	bequest	charity
compassionate	contribution	cooperation	donation
donor	encourage	endow	essential
favor	foster	furnish	gift
give	grant	grateful	help
humane	necessity	need	offer
open-handed	participate	partnership	patronage

petition	philanthropic	promote	public-spirited
relief	request	rescue	share
solicit	sponsorship	subsidy	supply
support	tribute	unsparing	urgent

## PHRASES

a campaign to stop/protect/encourage/support	acquaint you with
adopt the cause of	all you have to do is
as generous as possible	as soon as you can
be good enough to	broad program of services
call upon you for	can bring comfort to those in need of
champion of	come to the aid of
consider carefully	continue our efforts
counting on your contribution	deserves your thoughtful consideration
direct your attention to	financial backing
for the sake of	give assistance
good/guardian angel	have the goodness to
helping hand	humanitarian interests
I am confident that we can	in order to provide the necessary funds
it can make all the difference for	join forces
make room in your heart for	make this possible
on account/behalf of	our immediate needs are
please join your friends and neighbors in supporting	pressing need
rising costs	shaping the future
special cause/program/need	struggling with a worldwide shortage of
there are no funds presently available for	the time has never been better to/for
this program really works because	those less fortunate than you
urgently need you to	welfare of others

with open hands	without your contribution
working together, we can	your contribution will enable
your donation will make it possible	your past/unselfish generosity
for	
your tax-deductible gift	

## SENTENCES

Almost all the money we need to help preserve the Bradgate River Valley comes from people like you.

Any amount/contribution is most welcome/appreciated.

Before we can begin raising funds for the new annex, we need volunteers to help with the mailing—will you consider giving several hours of your time to help out?

But without your help, it cannot be done.

Do it now, please!

Help us work for a solution to this most tragic disease.

Here's how you can help.

I am troubled by the growing incidence of violence in our society, and I know you are too.

If each family gave only \$7.50 we could meet our goal of \$5,000.

I'll call you next week to see if you can help.

I'm writing to ask you to join our campaign.

I need your immediate help to make sure our legislation continues to progress despite a fierce lobbying campaign against it.

In order to take advantage of bulk prices, we need to raise \$10,000 before May 1.

It can be done!

I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

It is people like you who make the world a better place.

I want to share a story with you that illustrates for me what heroism is all about.

I want to tell you about the progress you have made possible.

I will truly appreciate whatever you can give, and I know these young scholars will too.

Join us today.

Last year, your contribution helped more than 3,000 students come closer to their dream of a liberal arts education.

Not a dime of your contribution will be wasted.

Now, more than ever, your continued support is needed to help keep the doors open.

Only by working together can we make a difference.

Our deadline for raising \$50,000 is April 1—could you please send your gift by then?

Please be as generous as you can.

Please encourage your friends and neighbors to call legislators, sign a petition, contribute funds.

Please mail your tax-deductible check in the enclosed postage-paid envelope.

Please respond quickly and generously.

Please take some time to read the enclosed brochure.

P.S. Write your check and make your phone call today.

Thanks for whatever you can do.

The Cypros Food Shelf presently faces a crisis.

The people of Port Breedy are counting on you.

The Raybrook Foundation is at a financial crossroads this year and we critically need your generous giving to sustain the important work we've begun.

We are looking to people like you to help us provide the dollars we need to continue our hospice program.

We invite you to become part of the Annual Giving Campaign.

We've accomplished a great deal, but much more must be done.

Whatever you decide to send, please send it today—the situation is urgent.

When you contribute to the Belknap Foundation, you invest in the future.

You don't have to give until it hurts—just give until it feels good.

Your contribution will help us expand our resources and do a far more extensive job of protecting our vulnerable waters.

Your donation is tax deductible.

Your generosity to the Boyle County Library Fund will ensure not only that we can preserve existing books, manuscripts, and archives, but also that we can continue to supplement the rising acquisitions budget for new books and periodicals.

Your generosity will be recognized in *The Anchor*, the monthly organization newsletter.

Your telephone calls, letters, and checks have made all the difference.

## PARAGRAPHS

Many alumni and friends have “shared the wealth” of their Jarrett education by contributing to the tuition aid fund. Some of these tax-deductible gifts have been given directly to the development office, while others have been donated in memory of a loved one. This funding is available for students who are unable to pay all the necessary tuition fees and is a satisfying way of feeling that you have passed on some of what you have received.

I’m asking you to do two things. First, write your congressional representatives and senators and tell them you want a change. Second, help us meet the rising costs of lobbying and publicizing this issue with a gift of \$10, \$25, \$50, or more.

Please indicate if your gift will be matched by your employer. (Your personnel office will provide the necessary information and forms.)

Will you be breathing cleaner air next year, or not? It’s up to you. A bill currently before the state legislature (SF1011) will set new, lower levels of tolerable pollution for rural and urban areas. To convince lawmakers of the importance of this bill, I need you to sign the enclosed petition and return it to me at once. Time is running out—the bill comes out of committee later this month. A successful petition drive requires your signed petition...and your dollars. Along with your signed petition, I’m asking you to return a contribution of \$25 or \$50 to support lobbying efforts for this important measure. But please hurry!

Because the School Enrichment Council is organized for the purpose of lobbying and influencing legislation, your gift or donation is not deductible under current IRA guidelines as a charitable contribution. It may, however, be deductible as a business expense. If you have questions, please contact the SEC or your tax accountant.

The challenges we face this year are substantially greater than those of the past. We need your support, and you need the benefits of our important work.

Please try to send at least \$15. Our only source of support is the voluntary dollars of those like yourself who are concerned about our vanishing wildflowers.

A sizable percentage of Clara Hibbert’s campaign funding consists of small individual contributions from people like you who live in the Fifth Ward. She is not the candidate of special interests. She is the candidate of the people who live and do business in your ward.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Mrs. Farrinder:

The Board of Directors of the James Area Community Councils recognizes your invaluable help to the J.A.C.C. in various capacities over the

years. We also note with great interest your successful fundraising efforts last year on behalf of the public library system.

We are asking for your support for the J.A.C.C. in a special way this year: Would you consider chairing the 2004 fundraising campaign?

This is of course a major commitment and you may have questions about it. Last year's chair, several members of the committee, and the Board of Directors will be happy to meet with you at your convenience to discuss what this position might involve.

We think you would be an effective and inspiring campaign chair, and we hope very much that you will say "yes."

Sincerely,

Dear Monty Brewster:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the McCutcheon Foundation and all those who benefit directly and indirectly from its work, I thank you for your most generous contribution. I think I can safely say we have not seen its like in all the years we have been asking individuals to help us with this important work.

Hundreds of people's lives will be materially and positively affected by the kindness and charity we have witnessed today.

Thank you, and may you reap one hundredfold the goodness that you sow.

Sincerely,

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Claggart:

You may wonder if people with severe disabilities really can live independently. Isn't it easier for a disabled person to be taken care of rather than to struggle with the day-to-day decisions about how and where to live? Isn't institutional living cheaper for the taxpayer? The answer is a resounding NO to both questions!

Consider Eva, a thirty-three-year-old woman with developmental disabilities who has lived with her parents all her life. She came to the Denver Center for Independent Living last March and asked for assistance so she could live in an apartment in the community. She *wanted* to be independent. And her parents were concerned about what would happen to Eva when they could no longer care for her.

DCIL staff went to Eva's home, evaluated her situation, and helped her decide exactly what special help she needed to live independently. One-on-one training in laundry, cooking, cleaning, money management, and job interviewing skills was provided. Additionally, Eva participated in our recreation program and found a great buddy to do things with.

Today Eva has a job washing dishes, her own checking account, a best friend, and a roommate with whom she will be sharing an apartment as soon as she has saved up her share of the rent deposit. Her family is

delighted with the self-confidence and independence Eva has developed through her work with DCIL.

DCIL provides training and support services to any person with a physical, emotional, or developmental disability who wants to live in the community or who is in danger of being placed in an institution. A recent study by the Colorado Department of Social Services shows a 40% savings to the taxpayer when severely disabled people live independently in the community. DCIL services help make that independence possible.

With your help, many more people like Eva can live productive lives. Please consider a tax-deductible end-of-year gift to DCIL to continue this important work. Your contribution directly enables persons with disabilities to become independent, contributing members of our community.

Thank you for your generosity, and happy holidays!

Sincerely,

See also: ACCEPTANCES, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, COVER LETTERS, FOLLOW-UP, GOODWILL, INVITATIONS, REFUSALS, REQUESTS, RESPONSES, THANK YOU.



## “Get Well” Letters

*I work for myself, which is fun. Except for when I call in sick. I know I’m lying.*

—RITA RUDNER

Most of us rely on “get well” cards, but if you’ve ever received a card with nothing but a signature below the commercial message, you know how disappointing it is. You’re grateful for the kindness, but you would have loved a personal, handwritten message.

Some “get well” messages are easy to send—the illness isn’t serious or we know the person only casually and aren’t too involved emotionally. At other times, however, our feelings of helplessness, anxiety, and even pity either keep us from writing altogether or produce letters we feel are awkward.

The main purpose of “get well” letters is to remind people that they are not alone in their trouble, to offer them the undoubted power of love and friendship as a force for healing. Your “encouraging word” does not have to be lengthy, literary, or memorable; a few warmhearted sentences will do.

### Send “Get Well” Letters to

- business customers, clients, and colleagues who are ill or who have an illness or accident in the family
- family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors, or acquaintances who are ill, hospitalized, recovering from an accident, undergoing tests, or having surgery
- friends or relatives in chemical dependency treatment or in treatment for depression, eating disorders, or other conditions

### How to Say It

- State simply that you are sorry about (or sorry to hear or learn about) the illness, accident, surgery, hospitalization.
- Express concern for the person’s well-being (“I want you to be comfortable and on the mend”).
- Be pleasant, positive, optimistic.

- Offer to help in a specific way: to make the person's most critical sales calls the next week, finish a project, sit in on a meeting, bring in library books, take children for the weekend or chauffeur them to school events, make calls canceling a social event, provide meals for the family, bring mail to the hospital and help answer it, read aloud to the person, run errands. A vague "Let me know if there's anything I can do" isn't helpful. Someone who is ill often can't even think how you can help or muster the energy to call you. Check with a family member or neighbor to see what needs doing. "People seldom refuse help, if one offers it in the right way." (A.C. Benson)
- In some cases, offer to visit if the person is laid up for a long time or if you think they would welcome company. Generally it's better not to visit those who are hospitalized or seriously ill at home. The point of a "get well" message is to stand in for you when someone isn't well enough to see you. Make it easy for the person to refuse your visit in case they aren't feeling up to it.
- Assure the person of your affection, concern, warm thoughts, best wishes, love, or prayers.
- End with your hopes for less discomfort, speedy recovery, rapid improvement, better health, a brighter tomorrow.

### What Not to Say

- Avoid being unnecessarily and tactlessly specific about the illness or accident. Say "your car accident" instead of "that horrible accident that took two lives," or "your surgery" instead of "your ileostomy."
- Avoid such words as "victim," "handicapped," and "bedridden" with their unnecessary overtones of tragedy, helplessness, and self-pity. Also avoid dramatic words such as "affliction," "torture," "nightmare," or "agony" unless the situation truly calls for them. Take your cue from the patient and do not jump to conclusions as to how they might perceive their situation. Be sympathetic without overstating the facts or dramatizing your own reaction to them.
- Don't resort to empty phrases, clichés, and false cheeriness like "It's probably for the best" (it doesn't feel "best" to the patient); "I know how you feel" (no, you don't); "God only gives burdens to those who can carry them" (this is arguable); "Every cloud has a silver lining" (not when the cloud is hovering over *your* bed); "At least you don't have to go to work" (the person might prefer the office to the sickbed); "You'll be up and around again in no time" (the patient is sure of no such thing, and the time passed in bed does not feel like "no time"). Re-read your letter to see how you, in the same situation, would feel about it.
- Don't criticize or question the patient's care or medical choices unless there is a good reason for doing so. Most people already have doubts

about whether they are being cared for as effectively as possible; it's upsetting when friends add to these doubts.

- Don't compare the person's situation, illness, or surgery to anyone else's. Even if you have gone through something almost identical, wait until the person is fully convalescent and distanced from the present discomfort and danger to bring it up. Each person's experience is unique and generates its distinctive woes.

## Tips on Writing

- Write as soon as you hear the news. Although "get well" letters are welcome at any time, prompt ones carry a stronger message.
- Focus more on the other person's situation than on your own feelings of inadequacy. If you feel helpless and upset, say so, but don't dwell on it. The situation is more about the patient's feelings than about yours.
- Address the person in the same manner you did before the illness. Jean Kerr once wrote, "One of the most difficult things to contend with in a hospital is the assumption on the part of the staff that because you have lost your gall bladder you have also lost your mind." It is wounding when friends and family treat the patient as someone who is not quite what she or he used to be. The recipient of your letter is still a person, with all the usual human hopes, interests, relationships, and emotions.
- Be brief if the person is seriously ill; later you can send a longer note or letter. Your note shouldn't be a chore to read; someone just out of surgery may not be up to deciphering illegible handwriting. The person convalescing at home, however, usually welcomes a long, newsy letter. Consider enclosing a few amusing or intriguing clippings from the paper ("What do you think about THIS?!"), photographs, a pressed flower, a cartoon, a sachet of potpourri, a quotation, a child's drawing, or colorful postcards or pictures. Enclosures are also a good idea when the usual words don't come easily—in the case of the terminally ill, for example.

## Special Situations

- Reassure hospitalized or ill employees that their jobs are secure and that their work is taken care of. If appropriate, reassure them about sick-leave policy and medical benefits. People often don't read the small print until they are too sick to do anything but worry about it. The person's immediate supervisor or someone from the human resources office can send information about insurance, sick leave, and company policies. If you know the person well, your simple assurance

that there is nothing to worry about may be sufficient. “Get well” messages from managers or executives—even when the employee is not personally known to them—inspire loyalty and are a good idea on both the personal and business levels.

- When writing to a sick child, say you’re sorry to hear about the sickness and enclose something colorful, entertaining, and age-appropriate: a word puzzle, riddles, a cartoon or clipping from the paper, a story you made up or found in a magazine, a sticker book. Hand-letter a “coupon” good for a stack of library books that you will bring over and pick up several weeks later, a carry-in meal from a favorite fast food place (if parents approve), thirty minutes of being read to, chauffeuring of friends to and from the patient’s house or the hospital. If you think the child will write back, help them along by asking a few questions: What’s the hospital room like? Who is the doctor? What is the best thing about being sick? The worst thing? What is your day like, from morning to night? What is the first thing you’re going to do when you get well?

- Don’t send a get-well message to someone who isn’t going to get well. And don’t write to say how sad you are. Instead, send your love along with an upbeat note (“I’m glad you’re resting comfortably now” or “It sounds as if you’re getting excellent care” or “I see your grandson’s math team is going to the finals”). Don’t mention death until the other person brings it up. Some people do not want to discuss it; others do. Follow their lead. Reread your letter to see that you have not subconsciously written a “sympathy” card to the person about their anticipated death. An appropriate letter says you are thinking about your friend and (if this is true) that you are praying for them. Include a shared memory, but avoid telling it as an epitaph (“I will never forget...” “I will always remember you as the one who...”). You might say instead, “I’m still thinking about your giant pumpkin. I’ll bet it would have won first prize at the State Fair.” Focus on those pleasures that are still possible for the terminally ill patient, for example, letterwriting, visits with family and friends, reading, old movies, card games, dictating memoirs.

- Those who are living with AIDS are your friends, neighbors, and relatives first, and only second are people with a usually terminal illness. Write as you would to anyone with a serious illness, and don’t assume the person’s time is short; medical advances are adding years of high-quality life for some people with AIDS. Being supportive and sending a card is more important than saying exactly the right thing. Focus on the person, rather than on the illness. You might also suggest a visit. Because of the false perception of the nature of AIDS, some people distance themselves from friends living with it, adding another hardship to the illness.

- When writing those in treatment for chemical dependency, eating disorders, and other such diseases, choose commercial cards that say

“thinking of you” rather than “get well.” Add a handwritten note that says in your own words “I care about you” or “You are important to me.”

- When a friend or relative is injured or ill enough to need constant care, write not only to the patient but to the person responsible for their care—spouse, parent, child, relative—and offer your emotional support as well as some practical help (running errands, chauffeuring, bringing meals, spending time with the patient so the caregiver has some free time).

## Format

- Commercial cards are appropriate for many different “get well” situations and their use is almost standard today. Some recipients skip the printed verse to read your handwritten message, but others read every word of the commercial message as though you had written it for them; for this reason, select your card with care. Always write something personal on the card—either a brief message at the bottom of the inside right-hand page or a longer message on the (usually blank) inside left-hand page.

- Use personal stationery, notepaper, or engraved note cards for handwritten notes.

- For business contacts or close friends, a typed message on business letterhead, personal-business stationery, or memo paper is as welcome as a handwritten note.

## WORDS

accident	affection	cheer	comfort
concerned	convalescence	diagnosis	discomfort
disheartening	disorder	distressed	heal
health	hope	illness	optimistic
painful	recovery	relapse	saddened
sickness	sorry	support	sympathy
treatment	uncomfortable	undergo	unfortunate
unwelcome			

## PHRASES

be up and about

bright prospects

clean bill of health	devoutly hope
early recovery	encouraging news
felt so bad to hear	fervent/fond hope
good prospects	greatly affected by the news that
have every/great confidence that	quick return to health
rapid/speedy recovery	regain your health
restore/return to health	sorry/very sorry/mighty sorry to hear
thinking of you	unhappy to hear about
wishing you happier, healthier days ahead	

## SENTENCES

Although we'll miss you, don't worry about your work—we're parceling it out among us for the time being.

Best wishes for speedy recovery.

Don't worry about the office—we'll manage somehow.

Fawnia says you're doctoring that annoying shoulder again.

From what I understand, this treatment will make all the difference/will give you a new lease on life.

Hearing about your diagnosis was a shock, but we're hoping for better news down the road.

Here's hoping you feel a little better every day.

I am concerned about you.

I hope you'll soon be well/back to your old self/up and around/up and about/back in the swing of things/back on your feet.

I hope you're not feeling too dejected by this latest setback.

I'm glad to hear you're getting some relief from the pain.

I'm sorry you've had such a scare, but relieved to know you caught it in time.

It's no fun being laid up.

I was so sorry to hear about your illness/that you were in the hospital.

Knowing your unusual determination and energy, we are anticipating a speedy recovery.

The news of your emergency surgery came as quite a shock.

The office/this place is not the same without you!

We expect to see you as good as new in a few weeks.

We're all rooting for you to get better quickly.  
 We're hoping for the best of everything for you.  
 We're thinking of you and hoping you'll feel better soon.  
 What a bitter pill to come through the heart surgery with flying colors and then to break your hip!  
 You're very much on my mind and in my heart these days.

## PARAGRAPHS

I'd love to hear from you when you feel up to writing. Until then, be patient with yourself and don't try to do too much too soon. I'm thinking about you every day.

We're relieved you came out of the accident so lightly—although from your point of view, it may not feel all that good at the moment. I hope you're not too uncomfortable.

I was sorry to hear about your arthritis. I hope you don't mind, but I made a contribution in your name to the Arthritis Foundation and asked them to send you informational brochures.

Can I help with anything while you're out of commission? Because of my work schedule and the family's activities, I'm not as free as I'd like to be. However, some things I would be delighted to do are: pick up groceries for you on my way home from work (about 5:30), run the children to evening school events, have them over on Saturday or Sunday afternoons, make phone calls for you, run errands on Saturday mornings, bring over a hot dish once a week. I'd really like to help. You'd do the same for me if our positions were reversed. I'll be waiting for your call.

I'm sending you some old *Highlights for Children* magazines and one new scrapbook. I thought you could cut out your favorite pictures and stories and paste them in the scrapbook. It might help pass the time while you have to stay in bed.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Harry,

What a shock to get to work this morning and have Louie tell me that the only reason I punched in earlier than you for once was that you'd been in an accident. It was pretty gloomy around here until we got some information from the hospital. Your doctor evidently thinks the general picture looks good and you shouldn't be laid up too long.

Louie has divided up your work between Max and Charlie so don't worry about anything at this end.

Best wishes,

Dear Mrs. Gummidge,

We were sorry to learn that you have been hospitalized. I took the liberty of stopping your newspaper and mail delivery for the time being (the mail is being held at the post office). Since I had a copy of your house key, I went in to make sure the faucets were off and the windows shut (except for leaving one upstairs and one downstairs open an inch for air). I've been going in at night and turning on a few lights so it doesn't look empty.

I wasn't sure you were up to a phone call, but I thought you'd want to know that the house is being looked after.

We're praying for your speedy recovery.

With best wishes,

Dear Ms. Melbury,

The staff and management at The Woodlanders join me in wishing you a speedy recovery from your emergency surgery. We are relieved to hear that the surgery went well and that you'll be back among us before long. For one thing, you are the only one who can ever find the Damson files.

Don't even think about work. Giles Winterborne is taking over the outstanding projects on your desk, and Felice Charmond is answering your phone and handling things as they come up. Marty South will send you a copy of company policy on sick leave and hospitalization costs (both are generous, I think).

Sincerely yours,

Dear Jay,

I hear you've been under the weather lately. As soon as you feel up to it, let me know and I'll call Daisy and Tom and Nick—there's nothing like a party for lifting the old spirits.

Best,

Dear Eliza,

Grandma and I were so sorry to hear that you've got the chicken socks. We didn't know chickens wore socks, so we were surprised. What's that? You say you have the chicken fox. What kind of an animal is a chicken fox anyway? What's that? You say you have a chicken box. Are you going to raise chickens in it? Oh, excuse me, you have the chicken rocks. We've never heard of them. Are they the latest fad, like pet rocks? Oho! We've got it now. You've got the CHICKEN POX. Maybe by the time you've read this long letter, you will be feeling a little better.

Grandma said to tell you to be sure not to scratch, but I'm sure you won't.



In a few days when you feel better we'll give you a call and you can tell us yourself how you're feeling.

Love,

Dear Olivia,

You realize, of course, that there will be no further bridge games until you are well! None of us is willing to invite a substitute—"Replace Olivia? As Sam Goldwyn put it in two words: Im Possible."

Don't worry about the homefront. George has things under control, and we are all taking turns entertaining your house guest, that nice Mr. Pim.

Give us the high sign when you are ready for phone calls or visits—or a game of bridge!

Love,

Dear Goldie,

I was sorry to hear about Abraham's accident yesterday. Your daughter seemed to think that although he was facing some surgery and was fairly uncomfortable, the outlook was good. I hope all goes well and that he can look forward to coming home soon.

You have taken no compassionate leave in the eight years you have been with us, so there is no problem with your taking as long as you like to be with Abraham. Patsy Tate assumed responsibility for your station; she may call you from time to time with a question, but otherwise the situation is well in hand.

Although our hospitalization insurance is based on a pre-admit system, this doesn't apply in the case of an emergency, such as Abraham's hospitalization. However, there are a few steps you should take in the next several days to regularize the situation. I've asked someone from Human Resources to call you about this.

If there is anything we can do to make things easier for you, let us know. In the meantime, you are very much in our thoughts.

Sincerely,

See also: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, BELATED, FAMILY, SENSITIVE, SYMPATHY, THANK YOU.

# Goodwill Letters

*It is not enough to collect today's profits, for your competitor is collecting tomorrow's good will.*

—THE SYSTEM COMPANY, *HOW TO WRITE LETTERS THAT WIN*, 1906

Goodwill letters are sales letter, but you aren't selling a product or service directly. You "sell" the recipient on your company's worth, reputation, friendliness, integrity, and competence. You want the reader to think well of your company and to keep you in mind for future purchases and services.

Although sales are generally based on price, color, dimensions, length of service contract, and other measurable properties, many other sales are based on feelings or attitudes. Goodwill letters appeal to the nonmaterial aspects of customer choice.

## Kinds of Goodwill Letters

- anniversaries: service/wedding
- announcements: change in prices/personnel/policies/address (see also ANNOUNCEMENTS)
- appreciation: good payment record/past business/customer referral (see also APPRECIATION)
- congratulations (see CONGRATULATIONS)
- customers' and employees' life events (see appropriate topic)
- holiday greetings (see HOLIDAYS)
- special events and offers: open houses/sales/discounts/gifts/samples/certificates/coupons
- surveys/questionnaires
- thank you: previous business/current purchase/suggestions/assistance/good work (see also THANK YOU)
- welcome/welcome back (see also WELCOME)

## How to Say It

- Open with a friendly or complimentary remark.
- State your main message (congratulations, thank you, keeping in touch, happy holidays, "just want to see how you're doing"). Almost

any occasion is reason enough to show interest in your customers or employees.

- Expand on the message (“I’m particularly grateful because...” or “You’ve been a delight to work with because...” or “I hope the New Year is a happy and healthy one for you and your family”).
- When possible, focus on the other person’s situation, interests, concerns; this is a “you” letter.
- Close with pleasant wishes for success and a mention of future or continued contact.

### What Not to Say

- Don’t include a strong sales message in a goodwill letter. Mention your products or services only lightly or not at all.
- Don’t dilute the impact of a goodwill letter by asking for business, or for a favor, or for higher work outputs, or by including business news or comments. Save them for another letter.
- Don’t be too effusive. Use a natural, informal tone that conveys a genuine friendliness.

### Tips on Writing

- Send goodwill letters within your organization. Although it is never mandatory to congratulate an employee on a service anniversary, for example, you encourage good morale and company loyalty by doing so. Holidays are an excellent occasion for goodwill letters written to employees on behalf of company management, firm officers, or board of directors.

- Take advantage of routine announcements (new type of billing statement, new address, meeting notice) to develop a goodwill letter (thanking customers for their business or employees for a good year).

- The end-of-the-year holiday season is an excellent time to send a goodwill letter, but mail it early so that it doesn’t get lost in the other December mail and so that customers haven’t already spent their gift budget elsewhere.

### Special Situations

- A survey or questionnaire about the customer’s use of your products or services is helpful to you; it also serves as a goodwill letter as most people like being asked for an opinion and thanked for their help. To ensure that it is a pleasure instead of a burden, the survey must be brief, easy to complete, and returnable with a postage-paid envelope.

- Goodwill gifts—samples, trial sizes, the first in a series, something the customer can keep whether they purchase anything or not—are accompanied by a cover letter. The sales message is not too strong as the free product is theoretically the message. However, follow up this mailing with a letter a few weeks later. At that time you can intensify the sales message. (See also COVER LETTERS, SALES.)

## Format

- All goodwill letters are typed on letterhead stationery, except for brief congratulatory notes to employees and colleagues that may be typed, or possibly handwritten, on memo paper.
- When sending holiday greetings to employees, or customers, or other general-message letters, a well-written form letter is customary and acceptable.

## WORDS

appreciate	delighted	enjoyed	grateful
inspired	kindness	memorable	pleased
remarkable	satisfying	sensational	special
superb	terrific	thoughtful	unique
valuable			

## PHRASES

happy/pleased to hear	how are you getting along with
just thinking about you	just to let you know
keep us in mind	let us know if
like to keep in touch with	look forward to your next
pleased to be able to	show our gratitude for
wanted you to know	wishing you all the best
would be glad to have you stop in again when	

## SENTENCES

All of us here at Larolle International send you warmest holiday greetings and our best wishes for a happy, healthy new year!

As one of our longtime customers, you may be interested in our new, faster ordering procedures.

Because we appreciate the responsible handling of your account, we are raising your credit limit to \$15,000.

Congratulations on your ten years with us—you're a key player on our (thanks to you!) successful team.

Enclosed is an article on retirement savings that we thought you'd like to see.

I heard something pretty special is going on over there!

Sawbridge Training Services, Inc. now has a special customer hotline—at no charge to the calling party—for all your questions and concerns.

The Pig and Whistle invites you to a customer appreciation sale, but bring this card with you as the sale is "invitation only."

## PARAGRAPHS

You used to order regularly from us, but we haven't heard from you for some time now. To help you remember how easy it was to order and how much you enjoyed our high-quality camping merchandise, we're enclosing a "welcome back" certificate good for 15% off your next order. We hope you use it—we've missed you!

I noticed the handsome photograph of you and your husband in Sunday's paper—congratulations on twenty-five years of marriage! Do stop by the office the next time you're in the store so I can congratulate you personally.

Thank you so much for referring Stanley Purves to us. It is because of generous and appreciative customers like you that Dorset Homes has been growing by leaps and bounds. We will give Mr. Purves our best service—and we are always ready to help you in any way we can. Thanks again for passing on the word!

You are cordially invited to an Open House on January 29 from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. to celebrate our fiftieth anniversary. We are taking this opportunity to show our appreciation to our many fine customers. Do come—we will have a small gift waiting for you!

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Jules,

I see that the bank is celebrating an important birthday—congratulations! You must be proud to see what a success Mignaud et Fils has become one hundred years after its founding by your great-grandfather.

All of us here at Philips Deluxe Checks wish you continued success and prosperity.

Sincerely,

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Charles:

It has been three months since your new floor tiles were installed. I hope you've been enjoying them. We have customers who still rave about floor tile they bought from us thirty years ago.

If we can be of service to you in the future, keep us in mind. We're planning a storewide three-day sale on all floor coverings in late January in case you're interested in doing any other rooms.

Thanks again for choosing a fine floor product from Geiger Tiles.

Yours truly,

Dear Joanna Pryke,

We are delighted to note that Warner Maintenance Experts have been cleaning your office carpets four times a year for six years now. As a business executive yourself, you know the value of faithful, longtime customers.

To show our appreciation, we'd like to pass on to you a sample of an effective carpet spot cleaner that we recently discovered. Note that we are not selling this product nor do we make any recommendation for it other than that we ourselves like it. When we had a chance to buy some samples, we thought of our favorite customers and decided to share them.

Enjoy the spot cleaner, and I hope you continue to look forward to our thorough, deep-cleaning process that leaves your carpeting like new!

Dear Hilda Cherrington:

Over the years, you have ordered a number of our fine products. You're one of the reasons that Lee Gifts is the premier mail order house that it is.

To thank you for your business and to introduce you to a completely new line of Christmas ornaments, we are enclosing the "Christmas Star" for your enjoyment. We think you will admire the fine craftwork that went into this delicate ornament. It makes a wonderful keepsake gift for friends and relatives. Also enclosed is a copy of our current catalog, which shows all twenty-five of the new "Memories" series of ornaments.

We hope you enjoy your ornament!

Sincerely,

See also: ANNIVERSARIES, APPRECIATION, CONGRATULATIONS, "GET WELL," HOLIDAYS, NEIGHBORS, SYMPATHY, THANK YOU, WELCOME.

# Holiday Letters

*A holiday gives one a chance to look backward and forward,  
to reset oneself by an inner compass.*

—MAY SARTON

With the proliferation of commercial greeting cards and holiday-oriented retail sales events (Memorial Day Sale! July Fourth Sale! Presidents' Day Sale! Labor Day Sale!), we are now conscious not only of such traditional holidays as New Year's or Thanksgiving, but also of dozens of others.

Businesses wanting to send goodwill letters to customers, colleagues, and employees can choose any holiday as a reason for writing. Family and friends generally send holiday greetings and newsy letters no more than once or twice a year, most often around the end of the old year or the beginning of the new one. Fundraisers know that people are more willing to give during the holidays and therefore schedule some of their most important appeals in late fall. It is not surprising that first-class canceled mail peaks substantially in December.

The United States Postal Service likes us to "mail early" to equalize the flow of holiday mail and reduce the expense of overtime hours for carriers. When not enough of us mail early, a metropolitan post office that ordinarily cancels eight or nine hundred thousand first-class letters per day will handle nearly three million per day just before December 25 (most of it scheduled for local next-day service).

Of all personal mail, 43 percent is accounted for by holiday cards (other greeting cards make up 21 percent and letters the remaining 36 percent).

## Holiday Letters Include

- Christmas
- Easter
- Father's Day
- goodwill letters
- Hanukkah
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Election Day
- form/annual letters
- Halloween
- Independence Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday

- Memorial Day
- New Year's
- Purim
- St. Patrick's Day
- Valentine's Day
- Yom Kippur
- Mother's Day
- Pesach
- Rosh Hashana
- Thanksgiving
- Veterans Day

## How to Say It

- Begin with an expression of the appropriate holiday greeting.
- Inquire about the other person and relate your own news if it is a personal letter. For a business letter, express appreciation for the other person and the hopes of being of service in the future.
- Wish the person happiness, success, health, prosperity.

## What Not to Say

- Don't let a greeting card do all your speaking for you. If you have nothing to say to the person beyond the sentiments of a mass-produced card followed by a preprinted or signed name, your gesture may be meaningless; most people are disappointed to open a card and find no personal message.
- When sending a goodwill letter to employees, don't use it to "get a point across," to chide the group, or to transmit office news.
- Don't send an aggressive sales message in a holiday letter (which is essentially a goodwill letter). An exception is a logical connection such as florists and Mother's Day or candy and Valentine's Day.

## Tips on Writing

- Not every household is a happy one. Among your friends, co-workers, and customers are people who have lost loved ones, who have financial worries, illnesses, or other burdens. Except for mass-produced business holiday letters, of which no one expects great sensitivity, choose seasonal greetings that are low-key and can convey your good wishes without an insistent and perhaps offensive cheeriness.

- Because some holidays are also holy days, businesses try to respect customers' beliefs. This means avoiding religious cards and sentiments unless your audience is well known to you. Do not casually bring religious elements into your goodwill letters; it may be perceived as hypocritical and self-serving. Consult with adherents of different faiths to see how your message appears to them. Since the majority of holiday



letters are mailed in December, a reference to the New Year is appropriate. Mention the year (“to wish you success and happiness in 2003”) to avoid confusion with religious year beginnings. Otherwise, use terms such as “the holidays,” “this season,” “at this time of year.”

- When sending holiday letters to family and friends, you can piggyback other news onto your greetings: the announcement of a new address, an engagement, a baby, or a new job. In the case of a divorce, for example, it is convenient to append the news to year’s-end letters. Be sure to mail your greeting early to save friends the minor embarrassment of sending their greetings to you as a couple.

- When one member of the household writes the messages and signs the greeting cards for all, it doesn’t matter if they put their name first or last.

## Special Situations

- Send holiday greetings to employees on behalf of company management, firm officers, or board of directors to generate goodwill and company identification. Wish the employees personal and professional happiness, offer congratulations for the good year just past, and express appreciation for the employees’ contributions.

- The most common customer goodwill letter is probably the year-end greeting. If your message is a general calling-to-mind letter or card (insurance agent, publisher, bank), send it anytime. But if December is an important sales or fundraising month for your organization, mail your greeting early in the month or even in November, before people shop or spend their donation dollars.

- Some people (and letterwriting authorities) find holiday form letters unacceptable, while others (including yet other letterwriting authorities) enjoy writing and receiving them. Whatever one thinks of them, they are unlikely to disappear. After years of printing letters pro and con, Ann Landers polled her readers and then wrote, “The verdict is clear—100 to 1” in favor of the holiday newsletters. They are practical for those who must either send a form letter or not write at all. People used to live and die in the same town; their pool of friends and acquaintances was small and didn’t require written communications. Today’s family might have hundreds of names in its address file. Form letters don’t have to be boring, and many aren’t. In the photocopied part of your letter, tell your general news: the year’s highlights, changes in your lives, travels, work and school happenings. You can organize your letter chronologically or by topic or by giving each family member a paragraph. A letter is more interesting if you discuss ideas as well as activities: your concerns about the environment, a good book you recommend, a lecture you attended, the state of television today, your political views. You can also include anecdotal

notes, quotations, photocopied clippings of interest, or snapshots. Be specific. Instead of saying something was “wonderful” or “beautiful,” give details. In the handwritten part of your letter (which is a “must,” even if it’s only a line or two), address the interests of that particular person, commenting on their last letter, asking about their life. If you receive a number of photocopied letters in your year’s-end mail, you are probably safe sending one yourself. If none of your correspondents use this form, it’s possible that you are marching to a different drummer—which may also be why they like you.

## Format

- The tremendously popular greeting card is always acceptable, but add a handwritten message to it. If your name is printed or engraved on the card, add a personal note. Don’t use social titles when having your name printed. For example, “Eddie Swanson,” “Goldie Rindskopf,” “Bill and Sarah Ridden” (not “Mr. and Mrs. William Ridden”) or simply “Bill and Sarah.” Children’s first names are usually listed on the second line. In the case of a single parent with a different name (“Grace Larkins”), the children’s last name is given (“Annie, Miriam, and Minnie Wells”).

- Business letters conveying seasonal greetings are generally typed, although some companies send greeting cards, postcards, or specially printed letters with colorful graphics. A letter can be made more personal than a greeting card and can carry more information. Investigate the cost differences between greeting cards and letters. The latter are generally less expensive even if you use special effects, decorations, and a colored envelope. Keep an idea file of some of the clever seasonal creations other businesses have used over the years. Eye-catching letters are not, of course, appropriate for all purposes; banks, legal firms, insurance companies, and others are not helped by overly “creative” letters.

- E-mail has a limited use in letting people know we wish them well on a holiday. Use it for people with whom you correspond almost entirely by e-mail.

## WORDS

blessings	celebration	gratitude	happiness
health	prosperity	serenity	joy
peace	pleasure	rejoice	remembrances
season	success	wishes	

## PHRASES

all the best of the season	at this time of year
compliments of the season	during this season and always
great/happy/festive time of year	happy memories
have appreciated your patronage over the past year	holiday greetings
in commemoration/celebration of	magic of the holiday season
much to look forward to	season's blessings/greetings
sincere wishes for	this festive season
warmest regards/wishes to you	wishes for a joyous season
wishing you love	with warm personal regards
wonderful holiday season	

## SENTENCES

As we at the Bennett Company look back over 2001, we remember with appreciation our friendly, faithful customers.

Best wishes for a bright and beautiful season/for a New Year of happiness.

Everyone here at Taunton-Dawbeney sends you best wishes for happiness, health, and prosperity throughout the coming New Year.

"Here's to your good health, and your family's good health, and may you all live long and prosper." (Washington Irving)

Holiday greetings and best wishes for the New Year.

I hope that 2002 was a good year for you and that 2003 will be even better.

I hope the New Year brings you health, happiness, and small daily joys!

May the beauty and joys of this season stay with you throughout the year.

May you be inscribed and sealed for a happy, healthy, and prosperous year.

May your shadow never be less!

On Rosh Hashanah it is written...On Yom Kipper it is sealed.

Our best wishes to you for a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Skip this part if you are allergic to form letters, if you don't care what we've been doing, or if you can't remember who we are.

The best part of this beautiful season is keeping in touch with special friends like you.

This is just a note to say we're thinking of you at Thanksgiving/Hanukkah/Christmas/Passover/Easter.

This time of year inspires us to count our blessings—and good customers like you are chief among them!

Though we can't be with you at the Thanksgiving table, our hearts are there.

Warm wishes to you and your dear ones this holiday season.

We're remembering you at Passover and wishing you happiness always!

We send our warmest wishes for health and happiness—and to borrow my Irish grandfather's blessing: "I hope we're all here this day twelve-month."

We wish for you the gifts of love, friendship, and good health.

We wish you all the best in the coming year.

## PARAGRAPHS

They don't call them Easter "bonnets" anymore, but the idea is the same! Come in and see our chic selection of spring hats: delicate straws from Italy, smart little toques from France, wacky and colorful sun-skimmers from Haiti, elegant felts from England, and much more! Buy a hat before Easter and receive a free stuffed bunny (wearing the latest in bunny bonnets) for the special child in your life.

Eileen spent a month in Germany this summer, surviving a no-show on her luggage, a tick bite that required serum treatment, and a bomb threat on her return flight. As for me, I've been working with a local group to promote a recycling program here—we can talk trash, even in front of the children. Now you're thinking, "Great! I didn't have to hear about their latest remodeling project." Sorry. This year we turned the pantry into a bathroom, and...

To start the New Year off right and to show our appreciation for your patronage last year, I'm enclosing a certificate good for one free meal with the purchase of another of equal or greater price.

Mother's Day is coming soon, and Rowley Floral Shops (with twenty-three metro-area locations) are offering a Mother's Day special you'll want to consider. Choose from one of six stunning floral arrangements (and six surprisingly low prices) to tell that very important person in your life how much she means to you. Included in your one low price is delivery anywhere in the metro area and a special Mother's Day card with Anne Taylor's charming verse:

Who ran to help me when I fell  
And would some pretty story tell,  
Or kiss the place to make it well?  
My Mother.

Come in today and see which of the six arrangements will bring a smile to YOUR Mother's face!

This Thanksgiving, as you reflect on your blessings, take a minute to consider those who have been overwhelmed by adversity. Help us provide traditional home-cooked Thanksgiving dinners with all the trimmings for the hungry and homeless during this Thanksgiving season. You can feed ten hungry people for \$13.90, twenty for \$27.80, or one hundred for \$139. Won't you help?

## SAMPLE LETTERS

TO: All Norton employees  
 FROM: Marda Norton, President  
 RE: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Beginning this year, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day will be a paid holiday for all employees. This day has particular significance for us as I believe Norton represents in many ways the lived-out reality of the dream for which Martin Luther King, Jr. lived and died.

We urge employees to devote at least a part of the day to some community service. Bob Gates in Personnel has a list of suggestions if you are interested.

Also, for this, our first holiday, you are invited to a potluck dinner in the upper cafeteria at 6:00 p.m. on January 16. Please call Bob Gates, ext. 42, with your reservation, and bring a covered dish. Depending on the interest shown in this year's potluck, we may continue the tradition.

Dear Homeowner,

It's not too late! If you haven't put in your shrubs and trees and perennials yet, Verrinder Garden Center's big Memorial Day sale will make you GLAD you didn't get around to it!

Enclosed is a checklist of our complete tree, shrub, perennial, and annual stock (helpfully marked to show sun/shade requirements) so that you can walk around your yard and note what you need. Bring the list with you and you won't forget a thing! Not only that, but when you check out, show your checklist and you will receive a 10% discount on your entire order!

Have a safe and happy Memorial Day weekend!

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Burdock,

Will you be entertaining family and friends over the Fourth of July weekend?

How about inviting just one more to the celebration? Galbraith Catering—a full-service, licensed, insured caterer—can provide you with box lunches, a full multi-course buffet, or anything in between. If you want to make the main course, we'll bring salads, breads, and desserts. Or vice versa!

Feel like a guest at your own party! We provide servers, clean-up crew, tables, chairs, linens, dishes, and expert advice and assistance.

We are glad to supply references, and as a concerned member of the community, we recycle all papers and plastics, and we donate extra food to the Vane County Food Shelf.

For special events, you may want to make an appointment to come taste some of our specialties and choose the ones you think your guests would like. For simpler events, you are only a phone call away from trouble-free hospitality!

Happy Fourth of July! And, remember, we can help with everything but the fireworks!

Dear Parent,

What perfect timing! Just as you're worrying about getting the children outfitted for the winter months, along comes Columbus Day! The children have a free day, and WE'RE having our lowest-prices-ever children's outerwear sale!

During our big Columbus Day sale (special hours 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.) we'll have free balloons and cookies for the children...and great prices and selections on over twenty name-brand children's coats and jackets.

Did we say it already? What perfect timing!

Dear Mrs. Gorsand,

If you're a kindergartener, Halloween can be scary. If you're a homeowner, it can also be scary—if you've gotten that far into fall without finishing your yard chores!

The MORGAN RENTAL BARN has everything you need to prepare for winter: leaf blowers, power rakes, lawn vacs, aerators, trimmers, chippers, shredders, drop spreaders, tillers—even lawnmowers if yours didn't make it through the season and you don't want to give a new one house room over the winter!

(And if you do finish your chores in time and want to celebrate Halloween with the kids, check out our rental party supplies!)

December 2002

Greetings Dear Family and Friends,

Seasonal salutations to you! We hope this finds you in good health and spirits.

The year 2002 has been especially noteworthy for our family. We saw Kalli play the clarinet at Carnegie Hall, Lauren's soccer team win the World Cup, Leah awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, and Paul discover the cure for cavities. Not bad for a year's efforts.

Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Just testing to see if you were really reading this. Actually, it has been a fine year, mostly filled with all of the usual family business—school, soccer, piano lessons, soccer, gymnastics, soccer, clarinet, soccer, and softball. Favorite activities included skiing, hiking, swimming, camping, golfing, eating in, and eating out.

As the wonderful holidays approach, we want to take this opportunity to send you our best wishes. Even though in miles you may be far away, in spirit you're close to our hearts.

All the best to you and yours in 2003!

Lots of love,  
Paul, Terry  
Kalli, Lauren, and Leah

See also: CONGRATULATIONS, FAMILY, FUNDRAISING, GOODWILL, SALES.

# Letters of Instruction

*Most of us would rather risk catastrophe than read the directions.*

—MIGNON MCLAUGHLIN

Individual letters of instruction have been replaced by form letters, package inserts, owners' manuals, product brochures, drugstore medication printouts, and other computer-generated or preprinted materials.

Such instructions include equipment or appliance operating instructions, safety instructions, assembly instructions, and installation instructions as well as instructions on how to dispute a credit card charge, apply for admission, sign an enclosed contract or lease, return merchandise, obtain a refund or exchange, or order replacement parts. Because commercial instructions deal with matters involving possible injury, loss of money, damage, and of course customer goodwill and repeat sales, they must be precisely crafted. "Read the manufacturer's directions with care.... This is one of the hardest kinds of prose in the world to write. It must be factual, accurate, and crystal clear." (Virginia Graham)

Businesses occasionally write letters of instructions, generally in response to a customer query. Letters of instruction are also written inside a company, most often as a memo.

Written instructions are given to the couple staying with your children while you are out of town, the patient following a specific care regimen, the neighbor child who waters your garden, the day-care provider, the carpenters working on your house.

## Write Letters of Instructions for

- agreements/contracts/leases
- babysitters/day-care providers
- changes to your will and other legal issues
- forms/applications/surveys
- house/plant/garden/pet care
- new policies/procedures/regulations
- operating instructions: appliances/tools/equipment
- payments
- product registrations/use/care
- return, repair, or replacement of merchandise



- samples
- shipping instructions

## How to Say It

- Thank the person (if you are responding to a letter, phone call, or in-person query) or state the purpose of your letter (“To help you get the most out of your new software, we offer the following suggestions for use”; “These instructions will help you care for your instrument so that it will give optimum performance pleasure”).
- Number or otherwise set off each step in the instructions.
- If appropriate, give a phone number, contact person and address, or other resource where further help can be obtained.
- End with a pleasant statement of appreciation or with a mention of future business or enjoyment of the new product.

## What Not to Say

- “Don’t give instructions in the negative” is a negative statement. “Word your instructions positively” is a positive one. Use the positive form. When you see “don’t,” “never,” and “should not” in your instructions, rephrase the sentence to read positively.
- Don’t use words like “simple” and “obvious.” Invariably, these words preface something that is neither simple nor obvious to readers, and they feel rebuked for not understanding something that apparently everyone else does.
- Don’t use a condescending tone. For example, sometimes a “broken” appliance is simply not plugged in. The first in a list of troubleshooting instructions generally advises seeing that the appliance is plugged in. State this neutrally so that the customer doesn’t feel too stupid if that’s the problem.

## Tips on Writing

- Be brief. After writing the instructions, pare them down to the essentials. “Explanations grow under our hands, in spite of our effort at compression.” (John Henry Cardinal Newman)
- Be specific. If you say “soak contacts overnight,” give the desired number of hours in parentheses. “Overnight” means different things to different people. When advising that an appliance be cleaned regularly, describe products and procedures that work best and tell what “regularly” means. Explain or graphically identify parts, in case readers are not familiar with industry terminology.
- Be intelligible. When preparing a form letter that will be used

thousands of times, ask people outside your department to read it for clarity. Some of the worst instructions have been written by experts; because they know their field so well they cannot understand the mind of the uninitiated well enough to adequately explain anything. In her 1923 book, Mary Owens Crowther counsels, “It is well to remember that motion pictures do not accompany letters and hence to take for granted that if a way exists for getting what you mean wrong that way will be found.”

- Be diplomatic. Some requests for instructions may appear inane to you and the answers so obvious you hardly know how to phrase your response. But people’s brains work in wonderfully odd and divergent ways, and the person may actually be looking at the situation in a way very different from the way you see it. Then, too, even if it is a “stupid” question, good public relations demands that you treat it as politely and helpfully as any other question.

- When possible, explain *why* as well as *how*. For example, “Do not use this compound when there is danger of rain followed by temperatures below 32 degrees.” Many people will accept this instruction without question. But others will wonder what rain and cold have to do with anything, and still others will ignore it, thinking it unimportant. If you add, “because the compound will absorb the moisture, freeze, expand, and probably crack,” users are far more likely to follow the instruction—and you will receive fewer complaints. “I can never remember things I didn’t understand in the first place.” (Amy Tan)

## Special Situations

- Cover letters often contain instructions. When sending someone a sample, a contract, or a product, for example, explain how to interpret or use the item.

- Any document that must be signed (contract, lease, stock transfer) is accompanied by a letter explaining where signatures or initials are needed, if the signatures need a medallion or notarization, which copy to retain for the person’s files, where to send the other copies.

- Assembly, installation, operating, and safety instructions are generally included in an owner’s manual. However, you might accompany the manual with a cover letter emphasizing special cautions (“Please particularly note the section on fire hazards”).

## Format

- Instructions to customers are typed on letterhead stationery.
- Memos are used for in-house instructions and are typed except for the briefest and most casual instructions.

- Form letters are used for routine letters of instructions.

## WORDS

advice	carefully	caution	d e m o n - strate	
description	details	e x p l a n a - tion	guidelines	
how-to	illustrate	indicate	i n f o r m a - tion	
method	operation	policy	precaution	
procedure	regulations	simplify	steps	system
warning	warranty			

## PHRASES

alert you to	always check to see
as the illustration shows	before you use your appliance
commonly used to	important safety instructions
it requires that you	much more effective to
note that	once you are familiar with
point out	recommend/suggest that you
standard operating procedure	you will find that

## SENTENCES

Caution: please read the rules for safe operation before plugging in your Villamarti "Thinking Bull" table lamp.

Follow the illustrated instructions to trim hair at home quickly and professionally with your Clavering Clippers.

I am not sure which model of the Thursley Electric Toothbrush you have, so I'm enclosing instructions for all of them.

If you have more questions, call our hotline at 800/555-5379.

If you plan to deliver your baby at Malmayne's Old St. Paul's Hospital, please note the following instructions for preadmittance.

Please note the following guidelines.

We are happy to be able to clarify this matter for you.

You don't need special tools to install this fixture, but follow the steps in the order given.

Your Aldridge electric knife will provide you with a lifetime of use if you follow these care instructions.

## PARAGRAPHS

Enclosed is the final version of the contract, which constitutes the complete and entire agreement between us. Please read it carefully and consult with your attorney before signing all three copies on the bottom of page 5. Please also initial clauses C1 and D3 to indicate your awareness of the changes we have agreed upon. Return all three copies to me along with a check covering the agreed-upon amount. One copy of the contract will be countersigned and returned to you.

Thanks for taking care of the hamsters while we're away. If you can stop by once a day, that'd be great. Give everybody one-quarter cup of hamster food. Fill their water bottles. Give Furball an apple slice and Marigold a banana slice from the fruit in the plastic box (they don't care if it's old and brown). The others don't need any special treats. We'll be back before the cages need cleaning, so don't worry about that.

To obtain a credit card for another member of your immediate family, please complete the enclosed form, making sure that both your signature and the new cardholder's signature appear on the indicated lines.

Thank you for agreeing to complete the enclosed survey. It will take only a few minutes. Use a # 2 pencil and carefully fill in the circles corresponding to your answer. Do not write in the white box in the upper right-hand corner. Fold the form along the dotted lines and seal by moistening the flap. Do not use staples or transparent tape. Your name and address are optional. Thank you!

Please give Caddy a bottle around 8:30 (or earlier if she seems hungry). If she falls asleep with the bottle in her mouth, take it out. Leave her bedroom door open so you can hear her if she wakes up.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Mrs. Dollery:

We were sorry to hear that your AutoAnswer communication system is unsatisfactory. All our equipment is carefully checked before leaving our Chicago factory. However, in rare cases, an intermittent problem may have been overlooked or something may have happened to the equipment during shipping.

Please return your system to us, following these steps:

1. Use the original carton and packing materials to ship the system back to us.

2. Address the box to: Customer Service, P.O. Box 1887, Woodlanders, IL 60031. (The California address is only for placing orders.)

3. Enclose a letter describing the problem (a copy of the letter you originally sent us would be fine) and mention whether the trouble occurred immediately or after use. The more information you can give us, the more quickly we can locate the problem.

4. Fasten the enclosed RUSH label to the top right-hand corner of your letter. This will ensure that you receive a fully functioning machine (your present system or a new one) within ten working days.

Thousands of satisfied customers are experiencing the delight and time-saving features of the AutoAnswer communications system every day; I want you to be one of them very soon.

TO: Estabrook County Residents

FROM: Estabrook County Board of Commissioners

DATE: October 2

RE: Yard Waste

The amount of garbage each of us produces is enormous, and so are the problems and costs of disposing of it. During the summer months grass clippings make up 24% of residential garbage.

Legislation passed earlier this year requires us to separate grass clippings and leaves—yard waste—from regular trash after January 1.

How do we do this?

1. Leave grass clippings on the lawn. This is the most cost-effective and environmentally sound way to deal with grass clippings. They decompose, returning nutrients to the soil, and never enter the waste stream.

2. Bag grass clippings and take them to one of the six County compost sites (list of compost sites is enclosed). Empty your bags of grass clippings and fill them with free compost for your garden.

3. Use grass clippings as mulch around trees and shrubs (if your grass has not been chemically treated).

4. Bag grass clippings and pay a trash hauler to collect them separately.

For additional information call 555-2117, Estabrook County's Compost Center.

P.S. We've had a number of calls asking if grass clippings will ruin the lawn if left on it. You can leave grass clippings on the lawn and still keep it healthy by (1) not letting the grass get too long before mowing (clippings should be no more than one inch long in order to filter down into the soil); (2) using a sharp mower blade (the sharper the blade the finer the clippings and the faster they decompose); (3) avoiding overfertilization (dense grass doesn't allow clippings to reach the soil to decompose); (4) removing excessive thatch (1/2 inch is ideal); (5) mowing the lawn when it's dry.

Dear William D. Carmichael,

Beginning January 1, we will be adopting an exciting new program of flexible benefits. To become part of this program, we ask that you:

1. Read the enclosed brochure, which explains the program.
2. Sign up for the informational meeting that is most convenient for you (list enclosed).
3. Schedule an appointment with one of the Human Resources staff to discuss the program and to ask any questions you might have. At that time you will be given a confidential record of your personal benefit program and an enrollment form to fill out specifying the way you want to “spend” your benefits.
4. Return the form by October 1. This date is important. If you fail to send in your enrollment form by October 1, you will automatically be enrolled in the “no choice” plan (see brochure for description).

If you have questions about this process, call Human Resources at ext. 43.

Dear Customer:

Thank you for your inquiry about home maintenance of your recently purchased VCR. We do not recommend that owners repair their own VCRs. Although it may be more costly, a professional repair job is a better choice in the long run.

However, if you are willing to accept the risks, there are some maintenance and small repair jobs you can attempt at home. You can clean the record and playback heads with a commercially manufactured cleaning cassette (read instructions before using). Note, however, that most of these special cassettes, particularly the dry kind, work by abrasion and can wear down your video heads. After unplugging your VCR, clean the interior with a soft painter’s brush and—for hard-to-reach places—a can of compressed air. You can also replace belts, rollers, switches, and springs, and can lubricate gears, shafts, and other moving parts every few years. Using a light machine oil, oil parts that spin. Grease parts that slide or mesh (but don’t use too much grease).

For further information, consult the manual that came with your VCR, check with a local repair shop, or write us with your specific question. See also: ADVICE, RESPONSES.

# Letters of Introduction

*Why is it that the person who needs no introduction usually gets the longest one?*

—MARCELENE COX

Letters of introduction are not as common as they were. The telephone has largely replaced them as a means of putting two people in touch with each other. Then, too, most people have enough social and business contacts to last several lifetimes. They are reluctant to suggest additional ones to friends unless they're sure the proposed introduction will be genuinely beneficial to both parties.

Although letters introducing people to each other are still seen, today's letter of introduction is more commonly used to introduce a new sales representative, new product, or new service to customers.

Letters of introduction are related to references and recommendations in that A is vouching for B to C. However, a letter of introduction is more like the superficial introduction that takes place at a large party, whereas the recommendation is more like a serious talk about someone your friend wants to employ.

## Write Letters of Introduction for

- business associates/employees
- friends moving/traveling to a city where you know people
- introducing business/product/services to newcomers in the area (see WELCOME)
- job seekers (see also REFERENCES)
- membership in clubs/groups/organizations
- new address/office/division/outlet/company (see also ANNOUNCEMENTS, WELCOME)
- new billing procedure/statement/payment schedule
- new employees/associates/partners/programs/policies/prices (see also ANNOUNCEMENTS)
- new products/services (see also SALES)
- requesting an introduction to someone from a third party
- researcher working in the other person's field

## How to Say It

- Begin by stating your reason for writing: to introduce yourself, to introduce someone to your reader, to suggest that your reader meet with someone visiting or new in their area.
- \* Give the person's full name, title, position, or some other "tag" to situate them for your reader.
- Tell something about the person being introduced—whether it is yourself or a third party—that will make your correspondent want to meet them ("she has collected paperweights for years, and I know this is a great interest of yours"). Mention people they both know, work or school connections, interests they have in common.
- Tell how you and the other person are related or acquainted.
- Explain why contact with this person is desirable.
- Suggest how the meeting can take place: the reader contacts the other person (include address and phone number); the other person calls your reader; you are inviting them both to lunch.
- Close with an expression of respect or friendship, and your thanks or appreciation ("I will be grateful for any courtesies you can extend to Chadwick").

## What Not to Say

- Don't organize introductions lightly. They set in motion responsibilities, demands on time and energy, and consequences involving several people. Reserve introductions for special cases.
- Don't insist that two people meet or predict that they will like each other. No one can tell who will take to whom. By emphasizing what they have in common, your reader can decide how much interest there might be in meeting the other person.
- Don't make the person feel obligated to accommodate you. Unwilling hospitality or grudging meetings do not have good outcomes. Allow the person room to maneuver and provide a way to save face if they must refuse you ("I realize you may not be free just now").

## Tips on Writing

- There are two ways of providing a letter of introduction. One is to give the letter to the person you're introducing; the person then calls upon the third party and presents the letter. The envelope is left unsealed, which means your letter will be tactful. The second way is to write directly to the third party, asking if they would be able to meet with, entertain, or help the person you're introducing.
  - Be specific about what you would like the other person to do: in-



vite your friend to dinner; make introductions in the neighborhood; explain work opportunities in the area.

## Special Situations

- It used to be that the letter of introduction had to be offered, unlike a letter of reference or recommendation, which is requested. In their 1942 book, *How to Write Letters for All Occasions*, Alexander L. Sheff and Edna Ingalls write sternly, "The note of introduction is often requested for a friend, never for one's self." This still applies to social introductions, but networking has changed the rules in the business world. You may tell someone you plan to be in a certain area or that you're job-hunting and wait for the other person to suggest introducing you to friends or colleagues. But you may also actively seek introductions.

- When you want A to offer hospitality to B, write A directly and ask that they respond to you. This spares B the embarrassment of presenting a personal letter of introduction only to be rebuffed because of lack of time or interest. It also spares A the awkwardness of being caught off guard and pressured into doing something they don't really want to do.

- Write a letter of thanks or appreciation to anyone who has written a letter of introduction on your behalf. You also write to thank the person to whom you were introduced for any courtesies extended to you.

- Introduce new employees, business associates, or personnel to those with whom they'll be working with a paragraph or two: their names, new positions, starting dates, responsibilities and work relationships, highlights of their professional backgrounds, and a request for others to welcome them.

- Introducing a new sales representative to customers before the first visit smoothes the representative's way. It also serves as a goodwill gesture, letting customers know that headquarters takes a personal interest in them. Express your confidence in the person's abilities.

- When introducing a change in billing procedures (new due date, automatic deposit, windowed reply envelopes, new statement format), explain why you instituted the change and, if possible, enclose a sample procedure. Focus on the value of the change to the customer, not its value to you. When you express appreciation for the customer's business and say that the change will improve service, your letter of introduction becomes a goodwill letter or even a sales letter.

- Letters introducing new products and services have strong sales messages. Only a phrase like "we are pleased to introduce" qualifies it as a letter of introduction (see SALES).

## Format

- Business introductions (requests for them, the letters themselves, and thank yous) are typed on business or personal-business letterhead. A personal touch is commonly added by a handwritten note on your business card to be included with the letter or given to the person requesting the introduction.
- Handwriting social introductions used to be required, but it is not necessary today.
- Form letters are useful when the same message of introduction must be conveyed to a number of people and the message is not particularly personal. For example, introducing a new slate of officers to a far-flung membership, or introducing a new product line or new payment schedules to thousands of customers.
- E-mail is used for very informal introductions.

## WORDS

acquaint	announce	associate	colleague
connections	contact	co-worker	greet
hospitality	introduce	meet	notify
pleasure	present	propose	receive
sponsor	suggest	visit	welcome

## PHRASES

acquaint you with	bring together two such
bring to your attention/notice	get together with
I'd like to introduce to you	if you have time
I'm happy to introduce you to	I think you'll like
known to me for many years	longtime friend
please don't feel obliged to	present to you
shares your interest in	similar background
the bearer of this letter	this letter/note will introduce
we'd like to tell you about	we're pleased to introduce
you've heard me mention/talk about	

## SENTENCES

Dr. Roselli plans to be in Rome for the next two years, so if you feel able to offer him any hospitality during that time, I would be most grateful—and I think you'd enjoy meeting him.

I'd appreciate any consideration you can extend to Mr. Chevenix.

I feel sure you would not regret meeting the Oakroyds.

I'll appreciate any hospitality you can offer Harriet.

I think you and Nathan would find you have a great deal in common.

I've always wanted to bring you two together, but of course it will depend on whether you are free just now.

I've asked Adela to give you a call.

Thank you for whatever you may be able to do for Ms. Ingoldsby.

There is little that Ms. Trindle does not know about the field; I suspect that you would enjoy talking to her.

This letter will introduce Nicholas Broune, president of our local professional editors network, who will be spending several weeks in New Orleans.

This will introduce a whole new concept in parent-teacher conferences.

We are pleased to introduce the Reverend Duncan McMillan, who will be serving as weekend presider as of June 1.

## PARAGRAPHS

Hello! May I introduce myself? I'm Flora Mackenzie, and I'm running for city council from Ward 4. I'd like to give you a few reasons to vote for me on November 7.

Sarah Purfoy of Clark Machinery will be in San Francisco February 3, and I've given her my card to present to you. I wasn't sure if you knew that Clark is working on something that may solve your assembly problem. If you haven't time to see her, Ms. Purfoy will understand.

Dear friends of ours, Ellen and Thomas Sutpen, are moving to Jefferson later this month, and I immediately thought of you. They've bought one hundred acres not far from you, and their two children, Henry and Judith, are almost the same ages as your two. I know you're busy just now, so I'm not asking you to entertain them or to do anything in particular—I just wanted you to know that the Sutpens are delightful people, and I think you'd enjoy them. Remember us to them if you do meet them.

I would like you to meet Rachel Cameron, as I think she would be a wonderful person to run the Good Samaritan program. I'm having a small cocktail party Friday night, and I thought I could introduce you to her then. Will you come?

A friend of mine whom I admire very much, Dodge Pleydon, will be

visiting various galleries in Atlanta this next week, and I suggested he see you. I think you would be interested in his work. He is rather shy, so if you do not like what he is doing, he will take the hint quickly. He is not at all like the artist you described who camped outside your office for days at a time trying to get you to change your mind!

I've just learned that our favorite babysitter has moved next door to you. Not only is it a small world but are you lucky! Bob Vincy is dependable, resourceful, and full of fun. I wish I could introduce you to him personally, but I hope this note will inspire you to go over and sign him up immediately.

I would like to arrange a meeting with Rosamund Redding to discuss setting up small investors' groups in rural areas. I know the two of you are good friends, and I thought it might mean something to her if I were to mention that you and I have been in the same investors' group and on the New Beginnings Center board of directors for several years. May I use your name when I write her for an appointment?

I don't often do this, but I'm going to stick my neck out and say that I think you ought to see an engineer named Alec Harvey. The man can do anything, and I think he may be just the person to unsnarl your transportation department. I've asked him to give you a call, but do feel free to tell him you're busy if you don't want to see him. It was I who urged him to call because I'm convinced it might be worth your while.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Ms. Cardross:

The account you have established with us has been reassigned within our Telemarketing Department. I would like to introduce myself as your new representative at Chambers Office Supply and take this opportunity to ask if we can be of any service to you at this time.

You are currently set up with account AB 40021, and you receive a 15% discount on list prices.

I notice that the printer ribbons that you normally buy are on sale this month (25% off).

If you have questions regarding your account, or need assistance in any way, please contact me.

Thank you for your continued business. I look forward to working with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Dear Edwin,

I'm going to be in New York for three weeks in June, trying to find a publisher for my book. I know that you have extensive publishing contacts there, and I wonder if you might know anyone in particular I ought

to see and, if so, if you would be so kind as to provide me with a letter of introduction.

I hope this is not an imposition, and I wouldn't want you to do anything you're not comfortable with, so I'll understand perfectly if you don't feel you have any information that would be useful to me.

In grateful appreciation,

Henry

Dear Henry,

Congratulations on finishing the book! I'm so pleased for you. And, as a matter of fact, I do know someone I think you ought to see while you're in New York. Maud Dolomore has her own literary agency and she deals almost exclusively with biographies.

I'm enclosing a brief letter that will introduce you to her. In this case I feel that I am doing both you and Maud a favor by putting you in contact with each other—I suspect your book is something she would be pleased to handle.

Let me know how things turn out.

With best wishes,

Edwin

Dear Henry,

I'm pleased to hear that you've finished the book! Unfortunately, I've looked through my files but don't see anyone who would be particularly useful to you or to whom I'd feel comfortable writing a letter of introduction.

Most of my contacts are now older and retired, spending their limited time and energy on their own projects. I hope you understand.

Sincerely,

Edwin

Dear Edwin,

I am grateful for the letter of introduction you wrote to Maud Dolomore on my behalf.

I had lunch with her, and she decided to represent my book. From finding an agent to finding a book contract is a long way, but I am pleased that the manuscript is in good hands.

The next time you are in town for a conference, would you let me know ahead of time so I can take you to lunch?

I will let you know immediately if Maud manages to find me a book contract. Thanks again.

Yours truly,

Henry

Dear Mr. De Fontelles,

Thank you for your letter of August 16 asking me to introduce your son to my grandfather. Although I am sympathetic to his project, I must say no to your request. My grandfather is in very poor health.

I wish you luck interviewing some of the other former members of the Resistance.

Sincerely yours,

Dear Gordon and Madeline,

Some good friends of ours, Nina and Charles Marsden, will be in Seattle August 18 to September 1. I usually hesitate to put strangers in touch with each other because it doesn't seem to work out. But in this case, I have a feeling you would enjoy meeting them. They are both officers of the Midwest Appaloosa Conference and are interested in arranging reciprocal shows with groups from outside the Midwest.

I've mentioned that I'd be writing you, but added that you are busy and may not even be in town during the last part of August, so there is certainly no obligation to call them. If, however, you have time and think you'd like to meet them, they'll be staying at the Horseshoe Inn on Murray Road.

All our best,

Dear Homeowner,

Let me take this opportunity to introduce you to Irmiter Contractors and Builders. Founded in 1921 by my great-grandfather, our sixty-eight years of experience have firmly established us in the home renovation, restoration, and remodeling industry.

We base our professionalism on the principles of old world craftsmanship and customer service. We are members of, actively participate in, and meet the requirements of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) and the National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA). Our six decades and four generations of experience in the building trades assure you, the homeowner, of the best return for your home improvement dollar. We are dedicated to creating the perfect living space for you and your family. Irmiter Contractors does this by combining state-of-the-art products and up-to-date management techniques with time-honored traditions of quality workmanship and attention to your needs. We recently received a Regional National Kitchen Design Award from NARI and offer complete design and drafting services for any type of project. In short, we are the problem solvers for the modern family living in an older home environment.

We invite you to compare, to talk to our customers, visit our jobs in

progress! You'll see what we've done, what we're doing, and what we can do for you!

Please send the enclosed card or give us a call today, and let's get started on our most important project this year—YOUR HOME!

Sincerely,

Tom Irmiter

President

P.S. We will accept invitations to bid on blueprints.

See also: ANNOUNCEMENTS, APPLICATIONS, REFERENCES, REFUSALS, REQUESTS, THANK YOU, WELCOME.

# Invitations

*Invitation is the sincerest form of flattery.*

—MARCELENE COX

All major and many minor life events are marked by occasions to which we invite family and friends. Being gregarious animals, we also celebrate non-events for the pure fun of it. Social gatherings offer friendship, entertainment, and relaxation. Invitations can range from the casual “Come visit!” scrawled on a postcard to engraved, highly codified invitations to dinner-dances.

In the world of business, banquets, lunches, cocktail parties, receptions, and open houses offer opportunities to conduct business, to improve employee morale, and to encourage or solidify relationships with clients, customers, suppliers, and others.

## Write Invitations to

- exhibitions/fashion shows/new equipment or product shows/trade shows/ book fairs
- fundraising events
- hospitality: lunches/dinners/teas/receptions/open houses/cocktail parties/ buffets/brunches/parties
- meetings/workshops/conferences
- open a store account/credit card account or to accept trial membership/ subscription/merchandise
- overnight/weekend hospitality
- recitals/performances
- religious ceremonies
- reunions—class, family
- sales (see SALES)
- school events
- showers: baby/engagement/wedding (see also WEDDINGS)
- speaking engagements: conference/banquet/workshop
- tours: factory/office/plant
- weddings (see WEDDINGS)



## How to Say It

- State the occasion (open house, awards banquet, anniversary celebration, dinner-dance, retirement party).
- Give the date and time: month, day, year, day of week, a.m. or p.m. (In formal invitations, the time is written out: “Seven o’clock in the evening”; “a.m.” and “p.m.” are never used.)
- Give the address. If necessary, include driving instructions or a map.
- Mention refreshments, if appropriate.
- Include the charge, if any (for fundraisers and certain other non-social events).
- Enclose an engraved or printed reply card and envelope for a formal invitation (“R.S.V.P.” is noted on the invitation). Slightly less formal invitations may have in the lower left corner of the invitation “R.S.V.P.,” “R.S.V.P.,” “Please respond,” or “Regrets only,” followed by an address or phone number. Informal invitations may also request a response and furnish a phone number. If appropriate, give a date by which you need a response.
- Indicate the preferred dress (black tie, white tie, formal, informal, casual, costume) in the lower right corner, when appropriate.
- Let overnight guests know when you expect them to arrive and leave, what special clothes they may need (for tennis, swimming, hiking), whether they will be sharing a room with a child, will need a sleeping bag, and whether there will be other guests. Ask whether they can tolerate animals, cigarette smoke, or other potential nuisances.
- Additional information might include parking facilities, alternate arrangements in case of rain, and an offer of transportation.
- Express your anticipated pleasure in seeing the person.

## What Not to Say

- Don’t use “request the honour of your presence” except on wedding invitations.
- Don’t use abbreviations in formal invitations except for “Mr.,” “Mrs.,” “Ms.,” “Dr.,” “Jr.,” and sometimes military rank. Avoid initials in names. In formal invitations, write out “Second” and “Third” after a name, although you may use Roman numerals: Jason Prescott Allen III. There is no comma between the name and the numeral. There is, however, a comma between the name and “Jr.” States should be spelled out (Alabama, not Ala. or AL) as is the time (“half past eight o’clock”).

## Tips on Writing

- Invitations are issued in the names of all those hosting the event. Women use whatever name they prefer (married name, business name, birth name) on invitations. The invitee responds using that name. When unsure how to address the woman, call her office or home and ask. For business invitations, hosts often use their titles and company names. Friends issue invitations together. Even groups (“The Castorley Foundation invites you...” or “The Central High School senior class invites you...”) issue invitations.

- The phrase “request(s) the pleasure of your company” is suitable for any invitation but the most casual.

- When you need to know who is coming, include a reply card. Of the same paper, style, and format as your invitation, this card is enclosed with a small envelope (at least 3½" X 5" inches to meet postal requirements) printed or engraved with your address and with postage on it. The card says, “M \_\_\_\_ [Ms., Mrs., Miss, Mr. Name to be filled in] \_\_\_ regrets \_\_\_ accepts [one is checked] for Saturday, November 20.” In some cases, “accepts” and “regrets” stand alone, and the guest crosses out the word that doesn’t apply or circles the one that does. The “M” is a puzzle to some people and contemporary usage often omits it. Printers have samples and can advise you on the format that fits your situation.

- When inviting a single person or someone whose personal life is unfamiliar to you, indicate whether the invitation (1) is intended for that person only; (2) includes a friend; (3) can be taken either way as long as you are notified ahead of time.

- When issuing an invitation to a family with young children, list each child by first name on the envelope on the line underneath the parents’ names; never add “and family.” Adults living in the family home should not be included in their parents’ invitation but should receive their own. Children approximately thirteen and up also receive their own invitations.

- In an invitation, it is wholly inappropriate to suggest the kind of gift one wants (mentioning where one is registered or specifying that money is the gift of choice, for example). Sometimes, however, people want to specify that gifts not be given (for example, the person celebrating an eightieth birthday who has no need of gifts and no room for them). Ann Landers approved two of the solutions suggested by readers of her column: “Your friendship is a cherished gift. We respectfully request no other.” Or: “We request your help in compiling a book recalling memories from our parents’ first fifty years of marriage. On the enclosed sheet, we ask that you write one memory or event that you have shared with them and return it to us by April 26. We believe that the loving memories they have shared with you, their friends,

would be the most treasured gift they could receive; therefore, we request that no other gift be sent.”

- Some sit-down dinner invitations specify the time guests are to arrive and the time dinner will be served. These are usually sent by people whose previous dinner parties have been spoiled by late arrivals.

- When dress is indicated, the following formulas are used. White tie is the most formal dress: men wear a white tie, wing collar, and tailcoat while women wear formal gowns. Black tie or formal means, for men, a tuxedo with soft shirt and a bow tie (a dark suit is not acceptable) and, for women, dressy dresses, cocktail-length dresses, or long evening wear. Semiformal means sports jackets or suits for men and dresses (but not long gowns) or dressier tops and pants for women; jeans and T-shirts are never appropriate as semiformal wear.

- Mail invitations to an important event involving out-of-town guests as early as six months ahead. Guidelines for mailing invitations include: four to six weeks before a formal dinner, ball, dance, charity benefit, reception, or tea; two to four weeks before a reception or cocktail party; three weeks before a bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah; two weeks before a casual dinner or get-together.

## Special Situations

- When issuing invitations to a casual in-house business event, send a memo or e-mail that includes: type of occasion (retirement, going-away, service anniversary, guest speaker); time, date, place; if refreshments will be served; if a collection is being taken up; an extension number to call for confirmation or information.

- Invitations to religious ceremonies include: date, time, place, type of ceremony, information about reception or gathering afterwards. Invitations to a bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah can be engraved, printed, or handwritten, and should include: the young person’s full name; time, date, place; details about reception or celebration afterwards.

- Invitations to a daughter’s debut are issued by the parents, whether married, widowed, divorced, or separated: “Sir Arthur and Lady Dorcas Clare request the pleasure of your company at a dinner dance in honor of their daughter Millicent on Saturday...” When simply receiving, the invitation can read: “Mrs. Sybil Fairford and Miss Elizabeth Fairford will be at home Sunday the second of June from five until half past seven o’clock, One Cooper Row.”

- Invitations to a fundraising event should be clear about what is expected of those who accept (“\$100 donation suggested” or “Tax-deductible contribution of \$500 per couple suggested”). Your wording may be limited by the allowable meanings of “tax deductible” and “donation.” Enclose a postage-paid reply envelope to make it easy for

people to respond; if you don't, tell where to send the check and how to obtain tickets. Some fundraisers fail because potential donors are busy people who can't take the time to read the small print or guess how they should handle the request; make it easy for them. Invitations to benefits, public charity balls, and other fundraisers need no response; purchase of tickets constitutes acceptance.

- When inviting a guest speaker include: the name of the event and sponsoring organization; the date, time, and place; the type of audience (size, level of interest, previous exposure to subject); the kind of speech wanted; the length of time allotted and the approximate time the speech will begin; equipment available for use; accommodation and transportation information or directions to the meeting site; whether there will be a question and answer session; a description of the program; meals available; name of the contact person; details of the honorarium; an offer of further assistance; an expression of pleasure at having the person speak to your group. At this time you also request biographical information from the speaker to use in the program.

- Sales letters are sometimes phrased as invitations to a special showing, sale, open house, or demonstration or to become a member, account holder, or subscriber.

- Annual meetings are usually announced with the formal notice required by corporation by-laws, but invitations may also be sent, especially if there is a banquet or dinner following. No reply is necessary to attend the meeting, but a reply is usually requested for the dinner.

- When your invitees fail to "R.S.V.P." and you need to know how many will be attending your event, the written word is no longer useful. You will have to telephone and ask. A recently married woman wrote "Dear Abby" (Abigail Van Buren) that of the one hundred printed wedding invitations she and her fiancé sent, only three self-addressed, stamped response cards were returned, yet most of their invitees showed up at the wedding. "Dear Abby" suggested the preventive measure of replacing "R.S.V.P." with plain English: "Please let us know if you are able to attend—and also if you are *not*." Except for formal or large events, you are probably better off inviting your guests by telephone (or at least inviting their answering machines) and then following up with an invitation in the form of a reminder.

- To cancel or postpone an invitation, follow the original invitation in format, style, and quality of paper. If there's time, the announcement is printed or engraved as the invitation was. Otherwise, handwrite the note, using the same style as the invitation: "Mr. and Mrs. Hans Oosthuizen regret that it is necessary/that they are obliged to postpone/cancel/recall their invitation to dinner on..." or "We must unfortunately cancel the dinner party we had planned for..." Urgent situations, of course, require the telephone.

- To cancel an invitation that you have already accepted, call your host at once and then follow up with a note apologizing for the change

of plans. Stress your regret and offer a believable excuse. When you cancel at the last minute or when your cancellation is an inconvenience, you may want to send flowers with your note.

## Format

- Formal invitations are engraved or printed on fine-quality notepaper, use a line-by-line style, and are phrased in the third person (“Terence Mulvaney requests the pleasure of your company at a dinner-dance in honor of his daughter...”). Printers, stationery stores, and large department stores offer a number of styles, papers, inks, and designs. Invitations may also be handwritten, using the same format and phrasing. The expression “requests the pleasure of your company” is appropriate for all invitations except formal weddings. Each invited person is mentioned by name and honorific (Ms., Mrs., Miss, Dr., Mr.) either on the envelope or in the invitation itself. All words, state names, and numbers less than 100 are spelled out. Abbreviations are not used. Telephone numbers and zip codes are never given on formal invitations. The zip code is usually available in the return address or on the reply envelope. Business formal invitations (awards banquet, for example) are issued in standard formal invitation format.

- Informal social invitations use either commercial fill-in cards or are handwritten on informal stationery or foldovers in usual letter style (first person, run-in format). The invitation is usually written on the first page of a foldover or, if this page has your name on it, you can add the details of the invitation below your name.

- Informal business invitations may be sent on letterhead stationery; in-house invitations may be issued via memo, even sometimes by e-mail.

- Invitations that are actually sales letters use a form letter format.

- Commercial fill-in-the-blank invitations are available; there is nothing wrong with using these for casual gatherings. Some of them are even quite cheerful and clever.

- If you entertain regularly you may want to order engraved or printed invitations with blank spaces to be filled in as needed: “Mr. and Mrs. Desmond Mulligan request the pleasure of [name’s] company at [event] on [date] at [time] o’clock, 1843 Thackeray Street.”

## WORDS

attend

cancel

celebration

commemorate

debut

fête

honor

installation

occasion

pleasure

postpone

rejoice

salute

solemnize

welcome

## PHRASES

accept with pleasure

be our guest

bring a guest

cordially invites you to

have the honor of inviting

in commemoration/celebration of

in honor of

invite you to

kindly respond on or before

looking forward to seeing you

obliged to recall/cancel/postpone

owing to the illness/death of

request the pleasure of your company

## SENTENCES

A revolutionary new service is now available to valued customers—and you're among the first invited to enroll.

Are you free after work on Friday to join a few of us for dinner?

Business attire is suggested.

Come hear noted Reformation scholar and professor of history Dr. Margaret Heath speak on September 12 at the 8:30 and 11:00 services at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, 1924 Forster Avenue.

Horseback riding will be available; dress accordingly.

I'm pleased to invite you to acquire the Golden American Bank Card.

It will be so good to see you again.

I urge you to look over the enclosed materials and consider this special invitation now.

Mr. and Mrs. Alex Polk-Faraday regret that it is necessary to cancel their invitation to brunch on Sunday, the sixteenth of August, because of the illness of their daughter.

Please confirm by June 6 that you can attend.

Please join us for a farewell party in honor of Veronica Roderick, who is leaving Wain International to pursue other business interests.

We invite you to apply for an account with Oxenham Leather Warehouse, Inc.

You are invited to a special evening showing of our new line of furniture from European designers.

## PARAGRAPHS

The Jervis family invites you to help Laura and Frank celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary. An Open House will be held at the Russell Eagles Hall, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, March 10, 2002.

You are invited to attend the Fall Family Festival this Tuesday evening from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at Temple Beth Shalom, 14 Burnsville Parkway. There will be puppet shows, activity booths, games, and refreshments!

Kindly respond on or before

September 18, 2003

M \_\_\_\_\_

accepts/declines

Number of persons \_\_\_\_

You are invited to hear the National Liturgical Choir under the direction of Maugrabin Hayraddin at 4:00 p.m. Sunday, September 28, at Quentin Methodist Church, 1823 Scott Avenue. The sixty-voice chorus will sing Russian liturgical music by Gretchaninof and Kalinikof and selections by Bach, Shaw, and Schutz. The cost is \$5 (\$3 for seniors and students).

You are invited to join the Henderson Video Club for one month—at absolutely no cost to you. Tell us which four selections you want, and they will be sent the same day we receive your order.

The tenth annual Public Works Open House will be held on Tuesday, October 3, from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Evans Street yards, a block south of Owen Avenue. The whole family will enjoy it. Get your picture taken on a Public Works “cherry picker.” Car buffs can tour the biggest maintenance and repair shop in the city. There will be drawings for prizes, music, food, and entertainment. Some lucky winner will take home an actual traffic signal used for fifty years on the corner of Blodwen and Marquand Streets.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Lucas-Dockery Importers, Inc.

cordially invites you to a

cocktail hour and reception

in honor of their merger with

Sheridan International Associates

Friday, the tenth of November

from five to half past eight o'clock

Mansfield Gardens

One Mansfield Commons

Dear James Ayrton,

You are invited to become a member of the Brodie Community Anti-Crack Coalition. Formed eight months ago, this coalition of three community councils and six community organizations was formed to oppose the activity and effects of illegal drug use and trafficking in Easdaile and especially in the Brodie neighborhood.

The Brodie Community Council already has two delegates to the coalition, but we believe it would be helpful to have one more. Your name has been mentioned several times as someone with the necessary experience and enthusiasm.

I'll call later this week to discuss the possibility of your participation.

Agnes Leslie Graham and Robert Graham

request the pleasure of your company

at a dinner-dance

on Saturday, the twenty-first of May

at seven-thirty o'clock

Harcourt Inn

R.S.V.P.

Dear Dr. Denny:

It is with great pleasure that I invite you to the 43rd Annual Engineering Society Conference. This year's Conference will be held at The Citadel Hotel in downtown Dallas from September 23 through September 27.

We are offering a valuable program with industry-wide applications, speakers who are recognized experts in their field, and topics with many implications for the future (see enclosed brochure). Ample time is scheduled for discussion periods. In addition, tours to two outstanding instructional materials centers have been arranged.

We have obtained special meeting rates from the management of The Citadel. Information on accommodations, transportation, and registration is enclosed.

If you have questions, please call the session coordinator, A.J. Cronin, at 610/555-1889.

Houghton-Maguire Marine



cordially invites you to its  
First Annual Marine Electronic Equipment Exhibit  
1:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.  
Saturday, May 2, 2003  
Highway 32 and County Road C

Refreshments  
Drawings

Dear Mrs. Lucas,

We are having a reception on Sunday, May 5, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. to celebrate our joy in the adoption of our new son, Philip. It would mean a great deal to us to have you join us.

Sincerely,

Haidée Czelovar Power and Raoul Czelovar  
cordially invite you to a reception  
celebrating the  
Golden Wedding Anniversary of  
Simone Rakonitz Czelovar and Karl Czelovar  
Sunday, the second of April  
at eight o' clock  
Wyatt's Village Inn  
Indianapolis  
R.s.v.p. Formal Dress

555-1980

Special Savings Invitation!

Dear Martin Lynch Gibbon:

As one of our Preferred Customers, you are invited to save 10% on every purchase you make at Murdoch Jewelers on July 14 and 15. This discount applies to both sale-priced and regular-priced merchandise, and includes our line of dazzling Iris diamonds, the ever-popular Headliner watches for men and women, and our complete selection of wedding gifts.

You deserve the best, and for two days this month, "the best" comes with a discount just for you!

Note: The discount does not include labor or service charges.

Dear Major and Mrs. Caswell,

We are planning to celebrate Mother and Dad's fortieth wedding anniversary with dinner at The Azalea Gardens on September 16, at 7:00 p.m. We would love to have you celebrate with us.

Please let me know if you can join us.

Fondly,

The Board of Directors  
of the Finsbury United Aid Society  
requests the pleasure of your company  
at a wine and cheese reception  
on Saturday, the fourteenth of May  
at half past seven o'clock  
Finsbury Community Ballroom  
for the benefit of  
The Finsbury Children's Home  
Suggested Contribution \$50 Black Tie

See also: ACCEPTANCES, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, ANNIVERSARIES, ORGANIZATIONS, REFUSALS, RESPONSES, SALES, THANK YOU, WEDDINGS.

# Love Letters

*If valentines are the equivalent of a gentle rain, love letters have all the power and unpredictability of a tropical storm.*

—JENNIFER WILLIAMS

The love letter is one of the most difficult and frustrating letters to write because we want it to be perfect. Stunning. Memorable. Touching. Thrilling. Witty. Tender. Intelligent. And—did we say?—perfect.

Nothing is too good for the person we love. We pick up the pen, imagining the letter that will say it all, the letter that will do everything but sing. But are our expressive skills equal to the grandeur and fineness of our love? We fear not.

There are two kinds of love letters. One is written to someone who returns your love. This letter carries an automatic guarantee of success; your reader thinks everything you do is wonderful. In this chapter you can pick up a few more high cards to go with the ace you already hold.

The second kind of love letter is written to someone you're courting, someone whose love you want to win. "Special Situations" offers assistance for this type of letter.

## Write Love Letters to

- a man
- a woman

## How to Say It

- Open with something simple, preferably your main thought ("Dearest Leslie, I miss you" or "Dear Jack, This has been the longest week of my life!").
- Expand on your thoughts and feelings about the other person.
- Recall happy times you've spent together in the past and mention future plans that include both of you.
- Tell what you've been doing, thinking, feeling. The other person is hungry for news of you. Self-revelation is appealing and will usually elicit similar revelations from the other person. "I have never told

you this before, but...”; “When I was little, I always dreamed that...”; “One thing I’m really looking forward to (besides seeing you again!) is...”; “My favorite way of spending a Sunday afternoon is...”

- Use the person’s name—not too often, but several times anyway. There’s nothing quite as wonderful as reading our name in our lover’s handwriting (or typing).
- Say the words: “I love you.” No one can hear it often enough, and lovers—especially new ones—have fears and doubts that crave reassurance.

### What Not to Say

- Don’t be brief. “Brevity may be the soul of wit, but not when someone’s saying, ‘I love you.’” (Judith Viorst) The other person wants you to never stop talking or writing or saying how wonderful they are. Don’t stint yourself.
- Don’t use language that isn’t natural to you. While you may be tempted to dress your letter in flowery or high-flown words, they will not sound like you, and you, after all, are the person your reader loves.
- Don’t write a letter that requires a note at the end: “Tear this up as soon as you’ve read it.” Recipients seldom do this. If it’s a simple matter of your embarrassment, it won’t make much difference, but if the letter falls into the wrong hands (as in the case of a romance involving infidelity), you may regret putting anything on paper.
- Don’t ask another person to read your letter before you send it to see if it is “okay.” The only people who know if the letter is good are you and the one you love. In 1901, Myrtle Reed wrote, “A real love letter is absolutely ridiculous to everyone except the writer and the recipient.” This is still true.

### Tips on Writing

- Before writing the letter, jot down ideas that will lead to sentences or paragraphs in your letter: What is special or unexpected about being in love? What is it about the other person that is endearing? What touches you deeply? What do you miss? What would you do if she walked into the room right now? When do you think about her most often? What things remind you of him? What would you like to give him if you could give him anything? Why do you admire her? Be specific. Give examples of times you were filled with love.

- Write from the heart. The most important quality of a love letter is its sincerity.
- Keep the other person in mind as you write. Try to imagine what

she is thinking, feeling, and doing at this moment and to picture her later as she reads your letter.

- Fatten the letter with newspaper clippings or cartoons, a dried leaf or flower, bookmark, photographs, a half-completed crossword puzzle for him to finish.

- Include a new “why I love you” reason in each letter.

- If you expect to write more than a few love letters, buy a book of quotations on love. They can inspire you while supplying quotations that express your feelings. Some are good for discussion: “Do you agree with Antoine de Saint-Exupéry that ‘love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking outward together in the same direction’?” Bess Streeter Aldrich once wrote, “Love is the light that you see by.” Aldrich would probably not mind if you wrote, “You are the light that I see by,” and then tell why that is.

- For inspiration, read the letters from the world’s great lovers.

- For passion and fire, read Juliette Drouet writing to Victor Hugo (in Louis Gimbaud, ed., *The Love Letters of Juliette Drouet to Victor Hugo*, 1914):

“A fire that no longer blazes is quickly smothered in ashes. Only a love that scorches and dazzles is worthy of the name. Mine is like that.”

“I see only you, think only of you, speak only to you, touch only you, breathe you, desire you, dream of you; in a word, I love you!”

“I love you *because* I love you, because it would be impossible for me not to love you. I love you without question, without calculation, without reason good or bad, faithfully, with all my heart and soul, and every faculty.”

“When I am dead, I am certain that the imprint of my love will be found on my heart. It is impossible to worship as I do without leaving some visible trace behind when life is over.”

- For a deeply sincere but lighter touch see Ogden Nash’s letters to Frances Rider Leonard (in Linell Nash Smith, ed., *Loving Letters From Ogden Nash: A Family Album*, 1990):

“I couldn’t go to bed without telling you how particularly marvelous you were today. You don’t seem to have any idea of your own loveliness and sweetness; that can’t go on, and I shall see that it doesn’t.”

“Both your letters arrived this morning. Thank you. I had sunk pretty low in the eyes of the elevator man, to whom I have been handing a letter to mail nearly every night and who has evidently noticed that I have been getting nothing in return. I could sense his thinking, ‘You have no charm, sir.’ But now it’s all right again—his attitude today is as respectful and reverent as I could wish.”

“I’ve been living all day on your letter.... Have I ever told you that I love you? Because I do. I even loved you yesterday when I didn’t get any letter and thought you hated me for trying to rush things. It ought to worry me to think that no matter what you ever do to me that is

dreadful I will still have to keep on loving you; but it doesn't, and I will."

"I've been reading your letter over all day, it's so dear.... Haven't you a photograph or even a snapshot of yourself? I want to look at and touch it, as I read and touch your letters; it helps bring you a little closer."

"Do you know what is the most delightful sound in the world? I'm sorry that you'll never be able to hear it. It's when I'm sitting in your library, and hear you cross the floor of your room and open the door; then your footsteps in the hall and on the stairs. In four days now—"

• For insight on a long-lasting, ever-green love, read Winston and Clementine Churchill's letters to each other (in Mary Soames, *Clementine Churchill: The Biography of a Marriage*, 1979):

Winston to Clemmie: "I love you so much and thought so much about you last night and all your courage and sweetness." "You cannot write to me too often or too long—my dearest and sweetest. The beauty and strength of your character and the sagacity of your judgment are more realized by me every day." "The most precious thing I have in life is your love for me." "Do cable every few days, just to let me know all is well and that you are happy when you think of me." "This is just a line to tell you how I love you and how sorry I am you are not here." "Darling, you can write anything but war secrets and it reaches me in a few hours. So send me a letter from your dear hand." "Tender love my darling, I miss you very much. I am lonely amid this throng. Your ever-loving husband W." "My darling one, I think always of you.... With all my love and constant kisses, I remain ever your devoted husband W." "Another week of toil is over and I am off to Chartwell in an hour. How I wish I was going to find you there! I feel a sense of loneliness and miss you often and would like to feel you near. I love you very much, my dear sweet Clemmie."

Clementine to Winston: "I miss you terribly—I ache to see you." "I feel there is no room for anyone but you in my heart—you fill every corner." "My beloved Winston, This is a long separation. Think of your Pussy now and then with indulgence and love. Your own, Clemmie." "My darling. My thoughts are with you nearly all the time and though basking in lovely sunshine and blue seas I miss you and home terribly. Tender love, Clemmie." "I'm thinking so much of you and how you have enriched my life. I have loved you very much but I wish I had been a more amusing wife to you. How nice it would be if we were both young again."

## Special Situations

- When writing to someone who doesn't (yet!) love you as you love them, be brief rather than long. Retain some emotional distance. While you might tell an amusing anecdote about something that happened at work, you wouldn't tell a story from your childhood that has high meaning for you. Don't move too quickly. Instead of inviting the other person to go camping with you, ask if they've ever done much camping, what they thought of it. Instead of sprinkling your letter with "you" and "I" (and especially "you and I" as if you were already a couple) keep it neutral. Your goal is much like that of a letter of application: you don't aim to get the job, you want to get the interview. You present yourself as a warm, bright, funny, interesting person so that you can keep the person's interest long enough to present yourself as a candidate for their love.

## Format

- Anything goes. However you choose to write (type of paper, envelope, stamp, fountain pen, felt-tip, computer, e-mail, even fax) will be an expression of who you are. You can write longhand on lined paper, on scented stationery, or on the back of your video rental receipt. You can use the same pen, ink, and paper every time so that your letters have a recognizable look even from a distance. Or you can vary your letters, sometimes on one kind of paper, sometimes typed, sometimes filling in the spaces on a greeting card. Use colorful postage stamps and rubber-stamp art on your envelopes. Or use perfectly decorous, conservative # 10 envelopes and say wild things in the letter inside.

- Is it a love letter if you send it by e-mail? Sometimes. In general, however, even the most romantic e-mailed words don't have the impact they have in a letter. A letter has come straight from the loved one's hands. It is personal, physical, an artifact. Rereading a printed-out e-mail doesn't do quite the same thing for us. Use e-mail for short "thinking of you" messages.

## WORDS

attractive	bliss	boundless	charming
cherish	dearest	delight	desire
dream	endless	eternal	fascinating
fate	feelings	fiercely	forever
handsome	happy	heart	heaven

immeasurable	incomparable	inspiring	intensely
lasting	lonesome	lovable	lucky
memories	miracle	paradise	passionately
promise	pleasure	remember	soulmate
sweetest	tenderness	treasure	unceasing
undying	unforgettable	unique	

## PHRASES

from the first moment  
 how I long to  
 if I had only one wish  
 in my heart  
 make life worth living  
 miss you so much

only love of my life  
 remember the time  
 so happy to get your letter  
 want to hold you  
 when we're apart  
 you make me feel

hardly wait for the day when  
 how much you mean to me  
 if only you knew  
 I often think of  
 memories that keep me going  
 one of the happiest moments of my  
 life

on my mind  
 re-read your letter  
 wait for the mail every day  
 whenever I think of you  
 without you, I feel

## SENTENCES

I couldn't sleep last night—and you know why.

I'd give anything to be able to touch you right now.

I had to tell you how much I enjoyed being with you yesterday.

I'll never forget the first time I saw you.

It's too lonely without you!

I've been carrying your last letter with me everywhere and it's getting limp—will you write me another one?

Just when I think I know everything about you, there's a new and wonderful surprise.

Two more days until I see you—I'm not sure I can wait.

We're some of the lucky ones—our love is forever.



You are my whole world.

You're the answer to my prayers and my dreams.

## PARAGRAPHS

You are the first thing I think of in the morning. You are the last thing I think of at night. And guess who's on my mind every minute in between!

There is nothing I want more to do and feel less able to do than write you a beautiful love letter. And yet when I try to write, I'm wordless. I've been sitting here, pen in hand, for half an hour trying to express what you mean to me. Will you accept some borrowed words? Jeremy Taylor once said, "Love is friendship set on fire." I feel them both, the fire and the friendship. Bless you for bringing them into my life.

I feel more intensely alive, more intensely real, more intensely myself since I met you. As if a dimming filter had been removed, the world suddenly shouts with bright colors, sharply outlined shapes, evocative scents, intriguing textures, music, laughter, flashes of joy. You.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Nance,

Because of you, I find myself filled with love for the whole world. Ruth Rendell wrote in one of her mysteries, "It is not so much true that all the world loves a lover as that a lover loves all the world."

Yes! I do! I now pat grubby children on their grubby little heads. I no longer kill mosquitoes. I straighten up crumpled weeds in the sidewalk cracks. I let dogs sniff my ankles (and, well, you know). I line up the bars of soap on the shelves at K-Mart. The world is mine, and I am its, and I love it. Maybe this is a way of saying that I love you a whole world's worth!

Kisses from me

Dearest Oliver,

There's only time for a quick postcard between flights, but I wanted to tell you how I treasure my last sight of you waving at the window. All I have to do is shut my eyes and I see you again.

Three more days and I won't need to shut my eyes! Until then, all my love!

Dear Sophy,

Scientists seem unable to measure love. I—you will not be surprised

to discover this, knowing how talented I am!—have found a way to do it.

When you go to your seminar in Denver next week, I am going to keep Traddles for you. Now you know that I am not, and have never been, a dog person. If I were a dog person, my tastes would not run to Mexican hairless dogs with bat-like ears, rat-like tails, wrinkled snouts, and, in this case, a cast on its leg.

Not only will I keep Traddles (we haven't taken the full measure of this love yet!), but I will let her sleep in my bed, I will be faithful to her finicky feeding schedule, and I will even—once or twice a day—kiss her on the lips. Or near the lips anyway. I will pet her, I will let her watch football with me and follow me around. I will take her for her daily walks, even though everyone who sees us will look at her cast, then look at me and think, "Ah, a man who abuses dogs!"

And all this because I love you. So, what do you think? Have I found a way to measure love?

Tom

See also: APPRECIATION, FAMILY.

# Memos

*Talk of nothing but business, and dispatch that business quickly.*

—ALDUS MANUTIUS

Memos may be an endangered species.

The memo (short for memorandum—plural is memos, memoranda, or memorandums) grew out of a need to streamline correspondence—to communicate swiftly, directly, and concisely—among employees of the same company. There was little point in using letterhead stationery, “Dear,” “Sincerely,” and other complimentary openings and closings with co-workers, managers, and executives with whom you communicated constantly and who were well aware of what company they worked for.

E-mail meets the same criteria and has the advantage of being faster and easier.

The memo is still useful: in a small office where not everyone has access to e-mail; when the information is too confidential for e-mail; when you attach it to a report with too many pages and graphics to be easily sent electronically; when you want a message routed and signed or initialed or commented upon; for routine out-of-house communications with customers or suppliers (orders, transmitting material, acknowledgments, confirmations, inquiries).

In *How to Survive From Nine to Five*, July Cooper writes, “The memo’s chief function, however, is as a track-coverer, so that you can turn on someone six months later and snarl: ‘Well, you should have known about it, I sent you a memo.’”

## Write Memos About

- announcements
- changes in policy/procedure
- in-house events
- instructions
- meetings
- reminders
- reports

## How to Say It

- The memo heading has four items. The most common arrangement stacks all four lines flush left:  
TO: Blanche Challoner  
FROM: Francis Levison  
DATE: Nov. 20, 2003  
SUBJECT: employee stock purchase  
Or, capitalize only the initial letter:  
To: Blanche Challoner  
From: Francis Levison  
Date: Nov. 20, 2003  
Subject: employee stock purchase  
You may also line up the information like this:  
TO: Blanche Challoner  
FROM: Francis Levison  
DATE: Nov. 20, 2003  
RE: employee stock purchase  
Or, arrange them in two columns:  
TO: Blanche Challoner DATE: Nov. 20, 2003  
FROM: Francis Levison RE: employee stock purchase
- Select a phrase for the subject line that will immediately tell the reader the main point of your memo: “new flexible tubing”; “personal telephone calls”; “medical benefits enrollment”; “change in library hours.”
- Begin the body of your message two to four lines below the subject line and flush left. All paragraphs in the body begin flush left and are separated by one line of space (text is otherwise single-spaced).
- Close with a request for the action you want, if appropriate, and a date by which it should be carried out: “Please call me before Tuesday”; “Please inform others in your department”; “Send me a copy of your report by Oct. 13.”
- Sign your name at the bottom of the memo or put your signature or initials next to your name in the heading.
- Reference initials and enclosure notation (if any) are typed under the memo flush left.

## What Not to Say

- Don’t include salutations or complimentary closings or any of the wind-up or wind-down sentences used in a standard business letter. You are courteous, but you get straight to the point.
- Don’t use the memo for official communications (promotions and resignations, for example); type those on letterhead stationery.

## Tips on Writing

- State the purpose of your memo in the first sentence.
- Be concise. Use short, simple sentences with present tense and active verbs. Although memos can technically be any length, the one- or two-page memo is the norm, except for report or issue memos. The shorter the memo, the more likely it is to be read immediately.
- Informality is the hallmark of memos. They are shorter and less complicated than letters. They use plainer language. Jargon and acronyms familiar to those in the company may be used. “We” is used instead of “Lamprey-Wutherwood Telecommunications, Inc.”
- When sending a memo to more than one person: (1) list each name, if you have only a few, after the word “To:”; or (2) list the principal recipient after “To:” and the others at the bottom of the memo after “cc:”; or (3) list all the names in a distribution list on the last page of your memo. After “To:” type “See distribution list on page 2.” Names appear without courtesy titles (Ms., Mr.) but occasionally with professional titles (Dr.). When managers are listed, their names are often given in order of corporate rank. In some companies, alphabetic order is used.

## Special Situations

- An issue memo is a fact-oriented report that summarizes important information so that policy decisions can be made. An efficient organization of material includes some or all of the following: (1) stating what the issue is, putting it in context, providing history or background information; (2) listing available or suggested options or solutions, along with their pros and cons; (3) detailing the costs, fiscal impact, and effects on other programs of each of the options; (4) if appropriate and welcome, naming steps necessary to implement the various options; (5) offering your recommendations; (6) suggesting the next step in the process (further study, meeting, vote, management decision).
- Employees can be invited to in-house events by memo, which is more “inviting” than an e-mail message. (See INVITATIONS for guidelines.)

## Format

- Memos are not sent on company letterhead. Some organizations have memo stationery with the company name or simply “Memo” at the top or forms preprinted with the headings. The use of computers (with a macro for memo headings) and e-mail, however, mean that dedicated memo stationery is less common.

**WORDS**

announcement	attachment	deadline	feedback
guidelines	information	instructions	listing
notice	outline	policies	procedures
progress	proposed	reminder	report
request	status	summary	

**PHRASES**

appreciate your comments on	background information
clarify recent changes in procedure	effective immediately
pleased to report	request a response by
route this message to	see below for
summarize yesterday's discussion	would like to announce the following

**SENTENCES**

Attached is a "get well" card for Ethel Ormiston—sign it if you like and pass it on to the next name on the list.

I've had phone calls from the following people about the new hook lifting devices—will you please return their calls and let me know what the problem is?

Please initial this memo to indicate that you've read it.

Please read the attached proposal before tomorrow's meeting.

Please sign up below for staff lounge cleanup duty and route this memo as indicated.

The attached outline covers projected work through the end of the year.

There's been some confusion about the new procedures for travel reimbursements—please note and file the following guidelines.

This memo will serve to authorize the preparation and filing of a patent application in the United States Patent and Trademark Office for a Three-dimensional Blueprint Acrylic Viewer.

We are pleased to announce that last week's sales figures as reported by the branch offices (see below) constitute a record for us.

We suggest you keep these fire drill instructions posted near your desk.

## PARAGRAPHS

As of January 1, all customer 612 area code numbers given on the attached sheet will be changed to 651. Please correct your files. Note that 612 area codes not on this list remain 612. Also attached is a list of the three-number prefixes that take 612 and those that take 651 so that you can verify the correct area code for any new numbers.

Devizes, Inc. will be selling company cars that are more than two years old. Employees will be given priority. Please see the attached list of vehicles with descriptions and prices.

The Pudney Summer Soccer Camp has approached Potter Commercial Development Corp. to ask if some of our employees would be interested in volunteering at the Soccer Camp this summer. Attached is a brochure describing the camp and an application form for volunteers. Thank you for considering their request.

Those of you who work with Priss Hartshorn will want to know that her husband of eighteen years died suddenly last night. No other details are known at present. Funeral services will be held on Saturday; for time and place, please check the newspaper. Those who want to send a note or sympathy card can write to her home address: 1963 Vassar Street, 50501.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

TO: Dick Phenyl  
 FROM: A.W. Pinero  
 DATE: March 3, 2002  
 SUBJECT: Internet training session on March 10

So far the following people have signed up for the class. Will you please arrange with their supervisors for their absence that day? It also looks as though we're going to need a larger room and a few more computers. Can you arrange it? Thanks.

TO: See routing list  
 FROM: Beck Knibbs  
 DATE: June 10  
 SUBJECT: Department picnic at Talbothays Farm

Listed below is everything we need for the picnic. Please pencil in your name after the item you're willing to bring and keep this memo moving! The last person should return it to me. Thanks.

TO: See distribution list  
 FROM: Human Resources

DATE: August 28

SUBJECT: Design department/reduced schedule

Elfine Hawk-Monitor will be working a reduced schedule in the design department for the next three weeks. She will be here on Mondays and Tuesdays only as she is preparing for her gallery exhibit of sculptures made solely from scrap metal. (See the current newsletter for dates and the location of her show.) We all certainly wish her weld...I mean well. This schedule is effective as of August 25 and I'll keep you posted on any changes. We will welcome Ms. Hawk-Monitor back full-time in mid-September and hope she won't have gotten rusty in the interim.

See also: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, E-MAIL, INSTRUCTIONS, REPORTS, REQUESTS, RESPONSES.



# Letters to Neighbors

*While the spirit of neighborliness was important on the frontier because neighbors were so few, it is even more important now because our neighbors are so many.*

—LADY BIRD JOHNSON

The search for harmony among neighbors is as old as human society. And there's been no dearth of advice on how to achieve it. In a much-consulted etiquette book written in 1902, *The Correct Thing*, Florence Howe Hall writes, "It is not the correct thing to take offense if a neighbor states civilly that he would prefer your children should cease from breaking his windows." Of course! Why didn't we know that?

Most troublesome issues between neighbors can be handled with common sense and good will. In *Miss Manners' Guide for the Turn-of-the-Millennium*, Judith Martin says, "The challenge of manners is not so much to be nice to someone...as to be exposed to the bad manners of others without imitating them."

## Write Your Neighbors to

- alert them to neighborhood problems
- announce personal or business news
- complain (see COMPLAINTS)
- congratulate them
- express appreciation
- introduce your local business to them
- invite them to a neighborhood gathering (see also INVITATIONS)
- offer help
- send birthday or anniversary wishes (see ANNIVERSARIES)
- thank them for assistance or cooperation

## How to Say It

- Be certain that writing is the appropriate road to take. If you've already had several unproductive in-person or telephone discussions about the issue, it probably is. Dealing with a problem face to face

keeps it smaller; once the discussion escalates to a letter, the situation becomes complicated.

- State your message (“thank you,” “congratulations,” “we invite you,” “have you heard”). If you’re asking something, be specific: stay off our new grass, trim trees that extend onto our property, contribute toward repairing a common fence.
- When appropriate, offer to reciprocate or in some indirect way express your desire to be a good neighbor.
- Close with a pleasantry, compliment, or forward-looking remark.

### What Not to Say

- Don’t accuse. This will put your neighbor on the defensive, a position that rarely apologizes or changes. Use an indirect construction. Instead of “You never put the lids on your garbage cans properly—no wonder it all ends up here!” say, “I’m finding garbage in the alley every Thursday morning.” Instead of “Your wind chimes are driving us crazy,” say “We are having trouble sleeping at night because of the wind chimes.”
- Don’t generalize (“you always park in front of our house” or “you never shovel your walk”). It undercuts your position and angers the other person who can think of lots of times they shoveled their walk.

### Tips on Writing

- If you are in the habit of sending your neighbors notes of thanks, appreciation, congratulations, or just saying “I’m thinking about you,” you will have a good basis on which to build when problems crop up.

### Special Situations

- Apartment living is grand when the owner and neighbors are. For letters about problems, see COMPLAINTS.

- Noisy, aggressive, or trespassing pets are a common sore spot. In all but the most egregious cases (obvious animal abuse, for example), you will not get much help from police or other authorities. Know from the outset that the solution to the problem most likely depends on how well you deal person-to-person with the pet’s best friend. At the least, try honey before you go for the vinegar.

- Unruly, unsupervised, or otherwise troublesome children are a neighborhood perennial. “Give the neighbors’ kids an inch and they’ll take the whole yard.” (Helen Castle) A letter is written only after you have spoken kindly with the child and, if that is not successful, with a parent. Describe how the situation appears to you, using “I” state-

ments (not “you” statements, as in “you let her run wild”). Offer to help resolve it or show yourself willing to compromise, if possible.

- In a dispute, attempt to see the issue from your neighbor’s point of view. The more clearly you see the other person’s side, the more effectively you can frame the discussion so that your neighbor derives some benefit or saves face in some way, thus opening the way to a solution.

- Build a sense of community with invitations to an annual block party, picnic, or ice cream social. Prevention of neighborhood problems is much more fun than most cures.

## Format

- Handwritten or typed notes can be hand-delivered or sent by mail or even by e-mail.

## WORDS

admire	agreement	appreciate	attention
careful	concerned	considerate	cooperation
coordinate	generous	helpful	kindness
neighborly	respect	responsibility	share
socialize	solution	troubling	upkeep

## PHRASES

affecting the neighborhood	ask your help/cooperation
block watch	combined action
community council	coordinate our efforts
did you know	get together to discuss
happy to help with	hope you are willing to
important to all of us	inform you that
not really my business but	on behalf of the neighbors opposite you
reluctant to write	wanted you to be aware that
what would you think of	would you consider

## SENTENCES

As a result of the fire last week at Opal and Paul Madvig's, they need warm school clothes for the kids, blankets and bedding, and kitchen utensils—if you can help, call me, will you?

On behalf of my family and several of the neighbors, I'm writing to ask you to make other arrangements for Cleo when you are at work during the day—her constant barking is a serious problem for the neighborhood.

Thanks for your comments on our new sod last week—it's about time we did something about the yard!

Thanks so much for taking care of things while we were away—we look forward to doing the same for you.

This is a long overdue note of appreciation to you for arranging the alley-plowing each winter.

We have corn coming out of our ears (and, oddly enough, ears coming out of our corn)—if you can use some, please help yourselves.

We've been so delighted to have you for neighbors that it's difficult to write this letter.

Your daughter is the most dependable newspaper carrier we've ever had—I'm writing her a note, but I also wanted you to know what a delight we think she is.

## PARAGRAPHS

This is to let you all know that Ajax is having a graduation party for about twenty of his friends Friday night. Bill and I will be home all evening, but if it gets too loud for you give us a call (I'm hoping you won't need to do that).

I've just heard that Rosa Klebb is in the hospital with a broken hip. Would the seven families on this block want to buy a plant for her—perhaps something she could later plant in her garden? I'll be glad to buy it and take it to the hospital. I'll stop by tomorrow to see what you think and to have you sign the card.

I'm ordering trees to replace the ones we lost in the storm. I've found a great nursery in Wisconsin with the healthiest trees and the lowest prices of any place I've checked. There's a discount for bulk orders so if any of you are also thinking of buying trees now, check out the attached list of trees and prices available. If some of you ordered the same time I do we'd all save on delivery charges plus we'd get a more favorable rate.

I'd like to ask Olivia and Kate to feed the rabbit and play with her a little while we're gone. Would this be okay with you? I'd leave a key with them and they could come and go when they liked. I feel sure they'd be good about locking up behind them.

I wonder if you're aware of zoning regulations prohibiting small businesses in this area. I'm guessing it wouldn't be a problem for the neighbors if your students didn't take up all the street parking three nights a week.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Hello Neighbor!

The Darnel-Greaves Community Council (District 14) is celebrating its 10th anniversary in the green space Saturday, July 15, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. We invite you not only to enjoy the refreshments and some good conversation with your neighbors but to consider joining us in making our neighborhood a better place to live. (The only "cost" of belonging is to attend monthly meetings when you can.)

In the last ten years the Darnel-Greaves Community Council has organized a recycling program, offered free radon checks of your home, bought bulk quantities of longlife light bulbs, lobbied for three new "Stop" signs, AND saved the green space from development!

See you Saturday!

Hi Imogen and Jack!

I offered to take care of Winifred Forsythe's sidewalks this winter (oh, the pride and energy of the owner of a new snowblower!) but I've got to be out of town next week. Would you mind clearing her sidewalks when you do your own? Knowing you, you will generously say yes, but if there's a problem, give me a call before Friday, will you? Thanks!

Dear Mr. Ancrum,

My name is Dora Lomax and I live around the corner from you at 1892 Ward Avenue. I noticed that you have a large pile of red bricks and a stack of old picket fence sections in your backyard. If you have no use for them and are planning to get rid of them, I'd love to take them off your hands and use them for my own backyard and garden.

I will tap on your door and introduce myself in the next day or two. Otherwise I would be happy to hear from you (555-6755). You may have your own plans for the bricks and picket fencing or they may already be spoken for. Perhaps you had planned to sell them? But if not and if I may have them, I would be grateful.

Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

See also: ANNIVERSARIES, APOLOGIES, CONGRATULATIONS, INVITATIONS, REQUESTS, SENSITIVE, THANK YOU.

# Letters Dealing with Orders

*If it is good and I want it, they don't make it anymore.*

—ELIZABETH C. FINEGAN

Standardized order forms, purchase forms, and requisition forms, along with 24-hour toll-free order lines and the convenience of buying and selling on the Internet, have almost entirely done away with letters dealing with orders. However, as long as human beings are ordering and filling orders, there will be errors, exceptions, special requests, and problems to write about.

## Write Letters About Orders When

- acknowledging/confirming receipt of order/telephone order/delivery date (see also ACKNOWLEDGMENTS)
- asking for additional information (see also REQUESTS)
- canceling/changing an order
- complaining about an order (see COMPLAINTS)
- explaining procedures/policy changes/overpayments
- inquiring about order/delivery date/how to return merchandise
- instructing how to order/return goods (see INSTRUCTIONS)
- making adjustments (see ADJUSTMENTS, APOLOGIES)
- payments are late (see COLLECTION, CREDIT)
- placing an order
- refusing/returning an unsatisfactory order

## How to Say It

- When ordering without a form, give: description of the desired item, quantity, size, color, personalization/monogram, and price. Include your name, address, zip code, daytime phone number, e-mail address, and method of payment. If you pay by bank card, include number, expiration date, and signature. When buying from a company in your home state, add sales tax to the total. Include stated handling charges and specify shipping directions or any special considerations.

- Indicate the date by which items must be delivered. You can thus generally cancel the order without forfeit if you don't receive it in time; the letter serves as an informal contract.
- To respond to orders received, use an all-purpose form for problems. Begin with "Thank you for your order. We are unable to ship your merchandise at once because..." and list possible problems so that one or more can be circled, underlined, or checked off. For example: "Payment has not been received." "We no longer fill C.O.D. orders. Please send a check or money order." "We cannot ship to a post office box. Please supply a street address." "We are currently out of stock—may we ship later?" "We no longer carry that item. May we send a substitution of equal value and similar style?" "Please indicate size (quantity, style, color)." "We must receive shipping and handling charges before processing your order."

### What Not to Say

- Don't include other business (request for new catalog, complaint about a previous order, request for preferred-customer status) when ordering. It may delay your shipment.

### Tips on Writing

- When ordering, arrange your request so that it can be deciphered at a glance. Instead of phrasing an order as a sentence ("I would like to order six pairs of size 11 men's white sports socks and four pairs of size 11 men's black dress socks, at \$7.95 per pair..."), type the information in columns or units of information, each on a separate line. Use Arabic numerals ("12 Menaphon harmonicas") instead of writing them out; they are more quickly read.

- Don't forget the niceties. In the nuts-and-bolts world of ordering it's easy to forget that real live people are on the other end. Buyers close their letters with, "Thank you for your prompt attention." Suppliers always say, "Thank you for your order" and indicate their readiness to be of service to the customer and an appreciation of their business; helpful, courteous responses serve as goodwill letters.

### Special Situations

- If your first order wasn't received and you order the same items again, emphasize that it's a duplicate order. The first order may turn up later and also be filled.
- When canceling a prepaid order or asking for a refund, include: order, invoice, or reference number; date of order; description of

merchandise. Specify whether the amount of the merchandise should be credited to your account, credited to your charge card, or returned to you as a check.

- To return merchandise, include in your cover letter: your name and address; item description; copy of sales slip, invoice, or shipping label; why you're returning it; request for a refund, credit to your account, or replacement merchandise; an expression of appreciation. If returning the merchandise is difficult because of its large size or fragility, write first and ask how it should be returned. Request (although you may not get) reimbursement for your shipping costs.

## Format

- Orders were made for forms, and vice versa. Simplify dealing with orders by creating standardized forms for the original order, problem orders, refunds, returned merchandise, and any other routine correspondence. Include such items as: customer's name, business name or title, address, zip code, telephone number with area code, e-mail address, fax number; customer's account number; description of merchandise, page where it appears in catalog, quantity, size, color, type; monogram or personalization; price per unit; total price for each item; shipping and handling chart; sales tax information; amount enclosed; shipping information (options available plus shipping time); space for bank card number, expiration date, and signature; spaces for signatures from purchasing department or other authorization.

- Individualized letters dealing with orders are typed on letterhead or memo stationery.

- If writing about a personal order from your home, a handwritten note is acceptable if clearly written.

## WORDS

billed	cancel	change	charge
confirm	deposit	expedite	freight
goods	handling	immediately	invoice
items	merchandise	overnight	overpayment
receipt	rush	stock	underpayment
urgent	warehouse		



**PHRASES**

as soon as possible/at once	being shipped to you
confirm your order	delivery date of
enclosed is my check for	hereby confirm
I would like to order	must cancel my order of
next-day delivery	please advise us/let us know
please bill to	prompt attention
retail/wholesale price	return receipt requested
ship C.O.D.	shipping and handling charges

**SENTENCES**

Along with your order I'm enclosing our spring catalog as I think you'll want to know about our new lower prices (many are lower than last year's!) and our completely new line of Strato work clothes.

If you cannot have the storage cabinets here by October 3, please cancel the order and advise us at once.

Please bill this order to my account # JO4889 at the usual terms.

Please cancel my order for the Heatherstone china (copy of order enclosed)—the three-month delay is unacceptable.

Please charge this order to my Carlyle First Bank Credit Card # 333-08-4891, expiration date 11/04 (signature below).

Please check on the status of my order # 90-4657 dated March 1.

Please confirm receipt of this order by fax or telephone.

Please include your account number/invoice number/order number on all correspondence.

We acknowledge with thanks your order of August 19 for one Pumblechook self-closing, self-latching chain link gate.

We are pleased to inform you that both your orders were shipped this morning.

We are sorry to advise you that we will be out of that particular piano tuning kit (# P11507) indefinitely.

We are unable to fill your order dated June 3 because your account is currently in arrears.

We hope you enjoy your personalized stationery, and will think of us for your other stationery needs.

Your order # KR45G is being processed and should be shipped by August 1.

## PARAGRAPHS

This is to confirm receipt of your order # 104-1297 dated June 17, 2002. It will be shipped on or about June 26. Please allow two to three weeks for arrival. If you need to contact us again about this order, use our reference number, 442-48895.

We appreciate your order # GR3 315 for the exposed aggregate. However, we no longer ship C.O.D. Please send a check or money order for \$782.11 so that we can expedite your order.

Please note that you received a special price on the sheet protectors. Your refund check for the overpayment is enclosed.

We are trying to match exactly the interior folders we use for our hanging files. The ones shown in your current catalog, page 217, look very much like ours. Could you please send us samples in several colors so that we can be sure before ordering?

With one exception, your order is being shipped to you from our Gregsbury warehouse this week. The six desktop calculators are coming from our Chicago warehouse, and we've been experiencing some delays from that warehouse recently. You may not receive the calculators until approximately March 8. Please let us know if this is acceptable.

Thank you for your purchase order (# K12291944) of July 9 for the Bascomb stairway elevator. Your order has been forwarded for fulfillment, and your Purchasing Department will be contacted with information about terms and shipping dates.

It was my impression that we agreed upon a delivery date of May 15. The confirmation I have just received gives June 15. This will unfortunately be too late for us. Please let me know at once if this was a clerical error or if we have a serious problem on our hands.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Ritson Projectors:

We have just received the audio cassette front-and rear-screen slide projector we ordered from you on November 3 (copies of order and invoice enclosed). One of the lenses appears to have been broken in transit.

Please let us know whether we should return the entire projector to you, take it to a service center if you have one in the vicinity, or have it repaired and bill you.

Yours truly,

Dear Dr. Sturmthal:

Thank you for your purchase order # H459991, which we received on June 3, for the TEM-500 Transmission Electron Microscope. Your order has been sent to our Administration Department and your Purchasing

Department will be advised directly as to the confirmation of terms and shipping dates.

Teresa Desterro, Manager of the Sales Department, located in our Gillespie office, will advise you of confirmed delivery dates and can provide you with answers to questions on order processing or shipment expediting. Alec Loding, National Service Manager, also located in our Gillespie Office, will send you complete information on the installation requirements of your new TEM-500. Both Ms. Desterro and Mr. Loding can be reached directly by calling 212/555-1212.

We appreciate your order and the confidence you have shown in our company and in our instruments. We look forward to hearing from you either now or in the future if there is any way in which we may be of assistance to you.

Sincerely yours,

TO: Conford Confections  
FROM: Alexander Trott  
DATE: June 3, 2003

I have been buying your Conford Confections for family, friends, and business acquaintances twice a year (Easter and Christmas) for many years. I will be traveling in Europe this summer and would like to take along Confections to offer friends and business acquaintances there.

My questions:

1. Do Confections need to be refrigerated, either to maintain good quality and appearance or to ensure that there is no product spoilage?
2. Do you have outlets for your product in Europe? (I would not like to cart them along as a "special treat" and then find them being sold everywhere over there.)
3. Is there any other reason that would prevent me from taking Confections with me? (Do they melt easily, for example?)

If you can reassure me on the above points, please place my order for:

6 boxes

8 oz. Gift Box

\$7.95

10 boxes

14 oz. Supremes

\$12.95

My check for \$197.83 (including sales tax and shipping and handling) is enclosed. Please ship to the letterhead address.

If you think the Confections won't travel well, I'll appreciate your saying so and returning my check.

See also: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, ADJUSTMENTS, APOLOGIES,

COLLECTION, COMPLAINTS, CREDIT, INSTRUCTIONS, REFUSALS,  
RESPONSES.

# Letters Related to Organizations and Clubs

*Please accept my resignation. I don't want to belong to any club that would accept me as a member.*

—GROUCHO MARX

Over 20,000 organizations are listed in the *Encyclopedia of Associations* (Gale Research Company), and many other clubs, societies, and groups function in less formal ways to provide people with ways of sharing interests, goals, professional information, and recreational activities.

Most club or organization correspondence is brief, routine, and easily written. But every announcement, invitation, or letter also represents the organization to its members and to the public and thus needs to be accurately written and attractively presented.

## Write Letters Dealing with Clubs/Organizations for

- announcements: meetings/changes/reminders (see also ANNOUNCEMENTS)
- invitations: organization events/speaking engagements (see also INVITATIONS)
- meetings: canceling/changing
- recommending new members (see also REFERENCES)
- recruiting new members
- requests: membership/sponsorship/applications/volunteers/ information/copies of agenda or minutes
- resignations
- welcoming new members (see also WELCOME)

## How to Say It

- When announcing a meeting, include: the name of your organization; date, time, and place of the meeting; a phone number for further information; at least one reason why a person would want to attend

the meeting (celebrity guest speaker, special election, panel discussion, book signing).

- When inviting a speaker, include: your organization's full title; an estimate of the audience size; a description of the group's interests so the speaker can tailor the talk to them; available equipment (overhead projector, microphone); directions or map; name and phone number of contact person.
- When recruiting new members, an attractive brochure describing the group and its goals and activities may best "sell" you to others. Send it along with a friendly cover letter that emphasizes the group's strong points and tells why your organization would be appropriate for this person.

### What Not to Say

- Avoid putting anything negative on paper. Personality conflicts, disagreements and disputes over policies, and shifting allegiances give groups their dynamism and distinct character, but they are best handled face to face. Committing delicate situations to letters that end up in public files is unwise.
- Avoid paternalistic, top-down language in letters. Most groups today have a collegial rather than hierarchical spirit. Although there may be officers or leaders, everyone in the organization feels some ownership of it.

### Tips on Writing

- Unless you write on behalf of a small, casual group, keep letters to members dignified, businesslike, and somewhat formal. Spuriously intimate letters are offputting to some people, whereas a reserved letter appears less warm but certainly not offensive.
- Spell members' names correctly. The mutilation of our names on mailing labels has become routine, but no one likes to see it from their professional or social group.

### Special Situations

- You may be asked to do a favor or write a recommendation for someone in your club or society whom you don't know well. By virtue of association and club kinship, there is a subtle pressure to respond positively. But you are no more obliged in this case than in any other (see REFUSALS).
- The word "chairman" has generally been replaced by "chair." (Other choices include moderator, committee/department head,

presiding officer, presider, president, convener, coordinator, group coordinator, discussion/ group/committee leader, head, organizer, facilitator, officiator, director, administrator.) Some people use “chairwoman” and “chairman,” but “chairwoman” is perceived as a less weighty word and it is seldom used as an exact match for “chairman.” “Chairperson” is a self-conscious term used mostly for women. The short, simple “chair” was the original term (1647), with “chairman” coming into the language in 1654 and “chairwoman” in 1685. Using “chair” as both noun and verb parallels the use of “head” for both noun and verb. (People who are upset about being called “a piece of furniture” apparently have no problem with the gruesome picture of a “head” directing a department, division, or group, nor is there evidence that anyone has confused people chairing meetings with their chairs.)

## Format

- Type all club or organization business correspondence. An exception might be a social club in which the members know each other well and handwrite notes to each other.
- E-mail messages and postcards are wonderfully useful in getting out meeting notices, announcements, invitations, and short messages.
- For an organization of any size, your mailing list should be computerized; combining such a list with the merge function of most word processing systems simplifies correspondence.

## WORDS

action	affiliation	agenda	allegiance
alliance	association	benefit	bylaws
coalition	committee	constitution	contribution
establish	generous	guild	headquarters
heritage	ideals	improve	legacy
league	nominate	policies	positive
practical	principles	procedures	program
progress	project	qualifications	regulations
rules	society	support	unwavering
valuable	welcome	worthwhile	

## PHRASES

a credit to the organization	affiliated/associated with
all-out effort	board of directors
committee chair	common goal
cooperative spirit	credit to us all
have been elected a member of	join forces
minutes of the meeting	service to the community
slate of officers	take pride in nominating
unfortunately must resign	worthwhile cause
would like to nominate you for	

## SENTENCES

Enclosed please find names of hosts, meeting dates, and topics for the next six months.

I am sorry to inform you that family illness obliges me to step down from the club vice-presidency, effective immediately.

It is with great pleasure/regret that I accept/decline your nomination to the Board of Directors of Montmorency House.

I would be happy to discuss any questions you have about the Club over lunch some day next week.

I would like to recommend/wish to propose Brander Cheng for membership in the Burke Orchestra Society.

Join now and take advantage of this limited offer to new members.

Our annual fundraising meeting to plan events for the next year will be held August 3 at 7:00 p.m.—all are invited.

Please accept my resignation from the Rembrandt Society.

To join the Frobisher Society today, simply indicate your membership category on the enclosed form and return it with your check.

Would you be willing to staff the Club's concession stand at the High-Lake Street Fair?

Would you please place the following three items on the agenda for the November meeting?

## PARAGRAPHS

The Belford Area Women in Trades Organization invites you to attend its next monthly meeting, Thursday, June 14, at 7:30 p.m. in the old



Belford Union Hall. Get to know us. See what we're trying to do for women in trades in this area. And then, if you like what you see, join up! Introductory one-year membership is \$45, and we think we can do as much for you as you can do for the Organization!

This is to acknowledge receipt of your membership application. You will hear from us as soon as we have received all your references and evaluated your application. Thank you for your interest in the Society.

I understand you and some other employees have formed several noon-hour foreign language clubs. I would be interested in joining your Italian-speaking group. Can you put me in touch with whoever is in charge of it? Thanks.

Congratulations to our new officers, elected at the September 12 meeting: Truda Silber, president; Martin Lynch Gibbon, vice-president; Andrew Davies, secretary; Maria Eleonora Schoning, treasurer. They will be installed at the beginning of the October 15 meeting. Our most sincere gratitude is extended to last year's officers, who saw the Club through a remarkable expansion and a rewriting of the bylaws. Thanks, Fran, Leo, Rose, and Dennis!

Notice: The Professional Educators Network will not hold its regularly scheduled monthly meeting on February 10 at 7:30 p.m. We regret any inconvenience this cancellation may cause you. The next meeting will be held March 8 at 7:30 p.m. in the Schley Library meeting room.

We are all, of course, very sorry to see you resign, but we understand that you have many other obligations at this time. We will be happy to welcome you back whenever your circumstances change. It's been wonderful having you with us.

Thanks so much for helping to clean up after the dance last Saturday. It's certainly not a popular job, which makes me appreciate all the more the good-hearted folks who did pitch in. The next time you're on the clean-up committee, you can put my name down!

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Hugh,

As a member and current secretary of the Merrivale Philatelic Society, I'm always on the lookout for other stamp collectors. Someone happened to mention yesterday that you have been collecting for years. Would you be interested in joining us?

Because some of the members have quite valuable collections, we are careful to accept newcomers only on the basis of three references in addition to the recommendation of a member.

I would like to propose you for membership, if you think it's something you would enjoy. I'm enclosing some information that will tell you a little more about the group and its activities.

Let me know if you're interested, because I'd be pleased to sponsor you.

Sincerely,

To: Board of Directors

It is with much regret that I resign my position as Secretary of the Macduff Drama Club. Family complications necessitate that I withdraw from any evening activities at least for the foreseeable future. If I can be of any help to my successor, I am available by telephone.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my association with the Macduff Club. Best wishes to all of you. I look forward to joining you again as soon as possible.

Dear Friend,

There is something remarkable and unique about the Tropical Fish & Aquarists Club. For one thing, it really is a club, not an organization whose "membership benefits" amount to little more than having your name on a mailing list and receiving a monthly magazine.

When you join the Tropical Fish & Aquarists Club, you don't belong to it—it belongs to you. You have the option of meeting with other hobbyists in large, small, or special-interest groups as often as you and your co-enthusiasts want. You are entitled to four free five-line ads per year in a magazine that reaches thousands of other hobbyists. We'll extend your subscription to the magazine for one year if you contribute an article for publication. And, at the end of each year, we share any profits from membership fees and magazine revenues with members.

You don't belong to the Club; it belongs to you!

Yours truly,

See also: ANNOUNCEMENTS, FUNDRAISING, INVITATIONS, REFERENCES, REFUSALS, REQUESTS, RESPONSES, WELCOME.

# Query Letters

*A query letter is really a sales letter without the hype.*

—LIEL EISENHEIMER

A query is a brief, well-written letter that sparks an editor's interest in publishing your article or book and ideally results in a request to submit the manuscript. A combination request letter and sales letter, the query letter is also used to persuade a literary agent to represent you or to pique someone's interest in a business proposal.

Editors like the query letter because it allows them to decide quickly if the idea is suitable for them and if it's interesting enough to pursue. They also use a good query letter to help them sell the idea in turn to their colleagues at editorial meetings.

For unagented writers, the query letter is the only way to approach publishers who no longer accept unsolicited manuscripts. And it may be a good way to approach even those publishers who do. Once an editor responds to your query letter with an invitation to send your manuscript, you can mark the package "Requested Material" and your manuscript will not end up doing time in the slush pile. You'll also know in advance that they're looking for material like yours.

## Write Query Letters for

- books
- business opportunities
- dramatic scripts
- filmscripts/screenplays
- journal and review articles
- literary agents
- magazine articles

## How to Say It

- Address your query to the right person. Familiarize yourself with the periodical or publishing house so that you are certain your material is suitable for them. Obtain the name and title of the editor receiv-

ing queries for your type of book or article (from a market book, online source, friend, writing group). Call the publisher and verify that the person is still there, that the name is spelled the way you have it, and that the person's title is current. (Don't speak to the editor; an operator, receptionist, or editorial assistant can answer your questions.)

- Orient your reader quickly to the purpose of your letter ("Would you be interested in seeing a 10,000-word article on...?").
- Establish a strong hook to keep the editor reading. Some query letters open with the first paragraph of the proposed article or book.
- Tell what type of book or article it is (reference, biography, children's), how long it is (in number of words), its intended audience, and its title. In a few sentences, describe the work so that the editor itches to read it; this paragraph must be your finest writing.
- Tell why your article or book is different from others on the same subject, why you're the best person to write it (mention relevant expertise or knowledge), and why you chose this particular publisher.
- List your past publications.
- Thank the person for their time and attention.
- Include a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE). Always. Every time.

### What Not to Say

- Don't discuss payment, royalties, rights, or other business issues in the query letter; it isn't appropriate at this stage of the process.
- Don't include personal information (age, marital status, hobbies, education) unless it is highly relevant to the proposed work. You do, of course, include your full name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and fax number.
- Don't use gimmicks to attract an editor's attention. Editors know how to zero in on the heart of the work and are not swayed by colored typefaces, joke or riddle openings (unless, of course, it's a joke or riddle book), or glitzy approaches. They usually consider gimmicks the mark of an amateur.

### Tips on Writing

- Follow instructions on how to query. Publishers that accept e-mail queries will say so; if they mention a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE) they prefer a written query. Most publishers offer writer's guidelines; get a copy (either from their website or by writing and enclosing an SASE) for any publisher you are interested in selling to.
- In general, address your query to associate editors and assistant

editors, who are more likely to read your letter than are executive editors or editors-in-chief.

- Your letter is one page long—two at the most. “A query letter is like a fishing expedition; don’t put too much bait on your hook or you’ll lose your quarry. Be brief and be tantalizing!” (Jane von Mehren)

- Convey your enthusiasm for the material.

- A clever, memorable, or intriguing title (as long as it’s appropriate to the material) is helpful to your cause. It doesn’t have to be your final title; select a working title or choose one solely for querying.

- Proofread your letter as many times as it takes to be certain there are no spelling, punctuation, grammar, or usage errors; they can be fatal.

- Multiple submissions involve sending the same manuscript to several editors at the same time. There is little agreement among authors and editors about the advisability of submitting multiply. In general, you can query several editors at the same time about the same project. A decision about submitting multiply is then made only if several editors reply to your query letter by asking to see the manuscript.

- For assistance on writing great query letters, see John Wood, *How to Write Attention-Grabbing Query & Cover Letters*, and Lisa Collier Cool, *How to Write Irresistible Query Letters*, both published by Writer’s Digest Books. There are also sections on query letters in books such as Judith Appelbaum, *How to Get Happily Published*, 4th ed., HarperPerennial, and Poets & Writers, Inc., *Into Print*, Quality Paperback Book Club.

## Special Situations

- The query letter has traditionally been used for works of nonfiction, but it is also being requested today for works of fiction. In those cases, the query letter is actually a cover letter, and an outline or synopsis and sample chapters are attached. To query about a fiction project, follow the guidelines in this chapter except that plot, characters, conflict, and resolution are described in the paragraph outlining your story or novel.

- Unpublished writers commonly fear that someone at the publishing house will steal their idea after reading their query letter. This is an exceedingly rare and undocumented occurrence. In any case, there are no new ideas. What is always new—and saleable—is the way the idea is clothed and presented. Even two people working on the same idea (there are supposedly only thirty-six dramatic situations) will produce significantly different works. Then, too, how will you get published if you don’t send a query letter? This is the way it’s done.

- When selling a reader on a business venture or idea, attach copies of charts or reports showing past successes, your resume, your credit

and business references, and any other data that relate to your proposal. Your object is to persuade the person to meet with you and discuss the matter. This letter differs from the literary query letter; you might profitably check with the chapters on APPLICATIONS, REPORTS, RESUMES, SALES.

## Format

- Query letters are always typed, preferably on personal letterhead stationery. Don't try to fit more than usual on the page by using a smaller typeface or reducing margin space.
- E-mail queries are being accepted by some editors (you can tell who they are because their e-mail addresses are listed in marketing reports). Check to see if there are any special e-mail requirements.
- Query by fax only if you have been invited to do so or if the market information suggests it.

## WORDS

appeal	audience	consider	contemporary
expertise	feature	fiction	interested
manuscript	material	nonfiction	outline
overview	publication	round-up	review
summary	synopsis	viewpoint	

## PHRASES

about 2,500 words	aimed at long-distance runners
first-person narrative	most recent publications include
mystery series	personal experience with
previous works include	professional background supports
publication credits include	sample chapters and outline
trade journal appeal	

## SENTENCES

As you do not currently accept unagented submissions, I'm writing to ask if you'd like to see a picture book manuscript.

Can the market stand one more book on weight control? If it's this

one—written by a physician with thirty years' success in helping patients lose weight—it can!

Enclosed are three sample chapters and an outline.

Enclosed is a SASE for your response.

I can submit the article by e-mail, on disks, or as hard copy.

I could deliver a 5,000-word article by September 1.

I look forward to hearing from you.

It was a dark and stormy night—or was it?

Thank you for your time and consideration.

“The Invisible Dragons” is an original Japanese folktale in which two brothers who try to outdo each other are rescued from a predicament of their own making by a girl whose name is too big for her.

When *should* you “cry wolf?”

## PARAGRAPHS

Francesca Lia Block once wrote, “Love is a dangerous angel.” She added, “Especially nowadays.” Would you be interested in seeing an 80,000-word manuscript on the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual dangers of sex today, supported by my current research?

A man with amnesia tries to negotiate the tricky steps of the life he is told is his. A familiar plot? Not in this novel.

Thank you for sending the submission guidelines for *Stucco City*. Having studied the guidelines and having also been a subscriber to your magazine for more than five years, I believe the article I want to submit to you is as new as it is highly appropriate to your readership.

Do you still believe in the existence of high-yield, low-risk stocks? You may not be as naïve as you think.

We met at a writers' conference in Los Angeles last month and briefly discussed the point at which a writer might need an agent. I believe I have reached that point.

I've been a season ticket-holder for the past three years and have thoroughly enjoyed your theater company's vitality, intelligence, and creativity. I am also a playwright with a script that I think is particularly appropriate for your ensemble.

On November 27, 1910, Marie Marvingt set the first women's world records in aviation. Earlier that month she had obtained her pilot's license, the third woman in the world to do so. An outstanding athlete (in 1910 the French government awarded her a gold medal for being expert in *all* sports), she was also a nurse, inventor, traveler, and the most decorated woman in the world. I would be surprised if your readers had ever heard of her.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Ms. Selston,

It's a question we'd all like answered: Is there life after death?

In September of 2000 I was pronounced clinically dead. As you might suspect, the diagnosis was correct only up to a point.

My experience fed a fierce curiosity to know how "normal" such experiences are. And what they mean. And whether they might be proof of anything.

Since that time, I have interviewed 184 people who have also been to the "other side" and returned.

Not since Moody's *Life After Life* has there been such a diverse collection of anecdotal evidence that there is indeed more to life than life.

Would you be interested in seeing some or all of this 70,000-word manuscript? Enclosed is a SASE for your reply.

Thank you.

From: jhall@email.com

To: query@email.com

Date: 06/26/2000 01:41 PM MST

Subject: Query: Renting a villa in Sicily

Hello. For my third stay in Sicily this fall, I'm renting a villa. Would you be interested in a 1,200-word piece comparing the benefits of villa life with hotel life, using as examples three of my favorite Sicilian hotels (one on the north coast, one on the south coast, and one in Taormina)? Travel information layered into the article includes getting to Sicily; the best times to visit; auto rental peculiarities there; the three best areas in which to rent villas and the daytrips that are possible from each; the sites that no visitor to Sicily should miss.

I've written eighteen books published by mainstream publishers as well as a number of magazine and other articles. I'll be in Sicily Oct. 13 Nov. 13 and could get the piece to you several weeks after that. Because Sicily is best traveled in spring or fall, the article might appear in the spring for fall travel.

Thanks for your time and attention.

Dear Randy Shepperton,

Would you be interested in seeing an 85,000-word novel, *The Boarding House*? Wealthy, intelligent, and isolated, Marshall is a house divided against himself. Denying important and life-giving facets of his self from an early age, he surrounds himself with shadows formed by his projected unacceptable imaginings. In this literary exploration of the divided self, Marshall struggles to resolve the four basic human conflicts—between



freedom and security, right and wrong, masculinity and femininity, and between love and hate in the parent-child relationship. In daring to love with maturity and without reserve he is finally able to deal with the boarders living in his house and to trade his mask for a real face.

I can send the complete manuscript or, if you prefer, sample chapters and a detailed synopsis.

I am also the author of a number of short stories, one of which won the Abinger Prize last year, and I was recently awarded a grant by our state arts board based on a sample from this novel.

Enclosed is a SASE for your reply.

Dear Mr. Windibank,

My family and I have just spent two months on a small island with no human company but our own. The strange story of why we went there and what we did while we were there is one that I think would interest your readers.

Each one of us—48-year-old husband/father, 49-year-old wife/mother, and 17-, 15-, 12-, and 10-year-old children—had a highly individual reaction to the experience and left the island changed in small and large ways.

Would you like to see a 5,000-word article, “Islands Within Islands”?

I am an architect with articles published in both professional journals and consumer magazines.

Enclosed is a SASE for your response.

See also: COVER LETTERS, REPORTS, REQUESTS, SALES.

# References and Recommendations

*The hardest thing is writing a recommendation for someone we know.*

—KIN HUBBARD

A letter of reference vouches for a person's general character. It tells a third party that the person is a responsible, functioning member of society. A reference is a verification: "Yes, I've known this person for some time."

A letter of recommendation is more specific and focuses on the person's professional qualities. It's often written by someone who knows the applicant on the one hand and the prospective employer, college, club, or awards committee on the other hand. A recommendation is an endorsement: "Yes, this person would be an excellent candidate for your program."

Letters of recommendation and letters of reference are so closely related that guidelines for writing them are similar.

A letter of commendation, written to congratulate a person on an achievement, is a combination of appreciation and congratulations; see the relevant chapters.

## Letters of Reference and Recommendations Include

- applying for club membership (see also ORGANIZATIONS)
- asking someone to write a letter on your behalf
- credit references (see CREDIT)
- recommendations: individuals/ideas/companies/projects/products/services/programs/workshops/new procedures/managerial decisions/ plans of action/public office
- references: former employees/students/friends/family members/customers/neighbors/babysitters
- refusing to write (see also REFUSALS)
- requesting information from a previous employer or from a reference cited by an applicant
- thanking someone for writing (see also THANK YOU)

## How to Say It

- Give the person's full name at the beginning of your reference or recommendation. Later refer to the person as Ms., Mr., or Dr. plus the last name for the first reference in each paragraph and "she" or "he" after that. Never use the first name alone.
- State your connection with the person (former employer, teacher, supervisor, adviser, associate, neighbor, mentor) and how long you've known them ("for five years").
- Focus on the person's character for a general letter of reference (trustworthiness, sense of responsibility, enthusiasm, tact). In a letter of recommendation, focus on job experience and skills (length of employment with you, special abilities and accomplishments, your sense of the person as a prospective employee). Support your statements with facts or examples.
- Close with a summary statement reaffirming your recommendation of or confidence in the person.
- Offer to provide further information, if appropriate. Include your name, address, and phone number if you are not using letterhead stationery.
- Give the reference or recommendation to the subject of the letter, leaving the envelope unsealed so the person can read it if they wish. If you've been asked to mail your letter directly to a personnel office, scholarship committee, or other inquiring agency, it is sealed. Occasionally you might be asked to sign your name over the sealed flap to insure confidentiality. Sealed letters are generally more persuasive than unsealed ones.

## What Not to Say

- Don't use the trite "To whom it may concern" if you can help it. A memo format is appropriate: "To:/From:/Date:/Re:." Or, give your letter a suitable heading such as "Introducing Letitia Fillimore," "To: Prospective Employees," "Recommendation of Helena Landless," "Letter of Reference for William Einhorn."
- Don't be too lavish or use too many superlatives—it undermines your credibility. Focus on two or three qualities and give examples of them.
- Don't tell the prospective employer what to do: "I'd hire her in a minute if she were applying here," "If I were you, I'd snap this one up," or "I can't think of anyone more deserving of this scholarship." Most people resent being told their business. You supply the information; they make the decision.

- Avoid saying anything you can't prove. This is often not so much outright dishonesty as misplaced enthusiasm, but it can work to the subject's disadvantage.

## Tips on Writing

- Be brief. One page, at most two, is sufficient to convey the general picture without repeating yourself, using unnecessary and fulsome phrases, or boring the other person.
- Be specific. Don't tell; show the reader. Instead of saying someone is honest, explain that the person had access to the cash register, and even when experiencing personal financial hardship, turned in accurate receipts. Instead of saying someone is compassionate, tell how they missed a dinner party to help a troubled co-worker.
- When applying for a position, don't send letters of recommendation with your application letter or cover letter and résumé. Wait until they are requested.

## Special Situations

- When you want to list someone as a reference, call or write first and ask their permission.
- When asking someone to write a letter of reference or recommendation for you, give the person enough information to be able to emphasize what will be most helpful to you ("I am applying for a position as a claims examiner"). Help the person tailor what they know of you with what you tell them of the company's needs and requirements. Enclose either a SASE for a return to you or a stamped envelope addressed to the person who is to receive the reference. Express your appreciation. Allow two to three weeks for the person to write the letter.
- After thanking someone for writing you a recommendation or reference, share any news of your job search, membership application, or college admission efforts—or at least promise to let the person know what happens. Even if you don't get the position or choose not to take it, you will want to express your gratitude to the person for writing on your behalf.
- When you believe that writing a positive letter of reference or recommendation for a former employee is unjustified or, in some cases, irresponsible, you may decline to provide one. Most employee records are accessible to employees, who may be inspired to legal action if they do not care for what you have written. According to some surveys, many employers are so wary of lawsuits that they don't give any information on former employees without their written consent and

indemnification. Some companies will never under any circumstances provide references; defending a defamation suit can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, even if the company wins. Many companies and personnel departments have a policy of either giving information only over the phone (thus, putting nothing in writing) or sending a form letter that acknowledges that the person worked there and verifies the dates of employment. Such a form might add: "It is against our policy to discuss the performance of former employees."

- When recommending a service or product, relate your own experiences with it, but refrain from giving a blanket endorsement. Provide a few disclaimers: "This is only my opinion, of course"; "You may want to see what others think"; "It may not work for everyone, but we liked it."

- When formally recommending a course of action, a policy change, or a decision, include: a subject line or first sentence stating what the letter is about; a summary of your recommendations; factual support for your recommendations; your offer to accept further negotiation, to engage in further research, or to submit additional information. If your recommendation is critical or negative, word it carefully. Point out the benefits along with the disadvantages, stating that you think the latter outweigh the former.

## Format

- Letters of reference and recommendation are typed on letterhead paper.
- Thank-you notes sent to people who have written letters of reference or recommendation are typed or handwritten on plain personal stationery or foldovers.
- In-house recommendations dealing with matters of policy are typed on memo paper.

## WORDS

admirable	approve	capable	commendable
competent	congenial	conscientious	considerate
cooperative	creative	dependable	diligent
discreet	dynamic	effective	efficient
endorse	energetic	ethical	excellent
experienced	first-rate	hardworking	honest
imaginative	indispensable	ingenious	initiative
integrity	intelligent	invaluable	inventive

loyal	meticulous	outstanding	personable
praiseworthy	productive	professional	recommend
reliable	remarkable	resourceful	respect
responsible	self-motivated	sensible	successful
suitable	tactful	thoughtful	trustworthy
valuable			

## PHRASES

able to energize a group of people	acquits herself/himself well
asset to any organization	attentive to detail
broad experience/range of skills	can attest to
creative problem-solver	dependable/eager/hard worker
did much to improve/increase/ better/upgrade	discharged his/her duties satisfact- orily
distinguished herself/himself by	do not hesitate to recommend
energetic and enthusiastic worker	every confidence in
first-rate employee	for the past five years
gives me real satisfaction to	great respect for
happy to write on behalf	has three years' experience
have been impressed with	held in high regard here
held positions of responsibility	highly developed technical skills
I heartily/wholeheartedly/highly recommend	in response to your request for in- formation about
many fine contributions	matchless record
nothing but praise for	one in a thousand
outstanding leadership abilities	rare find
recommend with complete confid- ence	responsible for all aspects of security
satisfactory in every way	set great store by
skilled in all phases of light clerical duties	sterling qualities
take-charge person	take genuine pleasure in recom- mending
takes pride in his/her work	vouch for

well thought of

## SENTENCES

Although company policy prohibits my writing you the recommendation you requested, I certainly wish you every success with your career.

Ann Shankland has highly developed sales and marketing skills and has also proven herself invaluable in the recruiting, training, and supervising of an effective sales team.

Elizabeth Endorfield is one of our most knowledgeable people when it comes to custodial chemicals, equipment, and techniques.

Hiram G. Travers was in my employ for ten years.

I am proud to recommend Ellen Huntly to you—I always found her work, character, and office manner most satisfactory.

In response to your inquiry about Chester Nimmo, it is only fair to say that he seemed to need constant supervision and our association with him was not an altogether happy one.

I've known Richard Musgrove as a neighbor and employee for six years.

I would prefer not to comment on Jean Emerson's employment with us.

Mary Treadwell worked as an X-ray technician at Porter General Hospital from 1995 to 2001.

Mr. Tamson's record with our company was excellent.

Thank you for the wonderful and apparently persuasive recommendation you wrote for me—I've been accepted at the Maxwell School of Political Science!

To evaluate your suitability for the sales position you applied for, we need to speak to at least four former employers or supervisors—please provide names, addresses, and daytime phone numbers of people we may contact.

Working with you has meant a great deal to me and I'm wondering if I may give your name as a reference when I apply for my first "real" job.

## PARAGRAPHS

Emily Wardle has asked that I write a letter of recommendation based on our professional association over the past several years. I've found Ms. Wardle to be intelligent and trustworthy as well as energetic in carrying out her duties. She is an asset to any organization. I would recommend her without reservation.

You asked what I thought of the Vanever-Hartletop contract. After looking into the matter, my best recommendation would be to return

the contract unsigned with a request for renegotiation of the default clause.

In response to your request for information about Tasker Lithography, I must say that we've had nothing but exceptionally fine dealings with them for the past eight years. Deadlines were met, and the quality of their work has been superb. The few times we asked for changes, they were carried out quickly and cheerfully. It's possible that others have had different experiences with Tasker. I can only say that we are pleased with their work.

Nancy Lammeter-Cass is being considered for a position as pastry chef in our catering service, and has given your name as a reference. Will you please complete the attached form as soon as possible? Enclosed is a self-addressed stamped envelope for your reply. Thank you.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Ms. Tartan,

You once offered to write me a letter of reference if ever I needed one. I would like to take you up on your kind offer now.

I am applying for a part-time teaching position in the Glendinning-Melville School District and have been asked to supply several letters of reference. In the hopes that you have the time and are still willing to write a letter, I'm enclosing an instruction sheet from the school district outlining what they need in a letter of reference as well as a stamped envelope addressed to the district personnel offices.

If for any reason you cannot do this, I will understand. Know that I am, in any case, grateful for past kindnesses.

Sincerely,

TO: Office of Admissions  
FROM: Dr. Charles Kennedy  
RE: Steve Monk  
DATE: November 15, 2002

I have known Steve Monk for four years, first as a student in my earth sciences and biology classes and later as Steve's adviser for an independent study in biology. I am currently helping him with an extracurricular research project.

Mr. Monk is one of the brightest, most research-oriented students I have encountered in eighteen years of teaching. His SAT and achievement test scores only begin to tell the story. He has a wonderful understanding of the principles of scientific inquiry, a passion for exactitude, and a bottomless curiosity.

I am interested in Steve's situation and will be happy to provide any further information.



Dear Ms. Burnell,

You requested employment information about Dan Burke.

Mr. Burke was employed with us from 1996 through 1999 as a structural engineer. His work was satisfactory, and I believe he left us to pursue a more challenging job opportunity.

If we can be of additional assistance, please call.

Sincerely,

See also: APPRECIATION, EMPLOYMENT, INTRODUCTIONS, ORGANIZATIONS, REQUESTS, RESUMES, THANK YOU.

# Refusals

*Most people hate to say no—but not nearly as much as other people hate to hear it.*

—DIANNE BOOHER

When we have no interest in an activity and also have an iron-clad excuse (being out of the country or out of money, for example), letters of refusal, regret, and rejection are easy to write. In all other cases, they are a challenge.

To write letters of refusal (also known as regrets and rejections), be certain that you want to say “no”; ambivalence will weaken your letter. A good reason for saying “no” is simply “I don’t want to.” When you have a specific reason for saying no, you can give it. However, the fact that someone wants you to do something confers no obligation on you to defend your decision. People who become angry with you for saying no, who try to manipulate you, or who make you feel guilty are confusing requests with demands.

## Write a Refusal When Saying “No” to

- adjustment/claims requests
- applications: employment/franchise
- gifts
- invitations: personal/business
- proposals: contracts/bids/books
- requests: contributions/credit/introductions/time/volunteering/promotions/raises/loans of money or possessions/appointments/meetings/interviews
- sales: presentations/offers/invitations
- wedding invitations (see WEDDINGS)

## How to Say It

- Thank the person for the offer, request, invitation (which you describe or mention specifically).

- Make a courteous remark, agreeing with the person that the cause is worthy, the proposal well thought-out, the résumé impressive, or the invitation appealing.
- Say “no,” expressing your regret at having to do so.
- If you wish, explain your position.
- Suggest alternate courses of action or other resources, if appropriate.
- Close with a pleasant wish to be of more help next time, to see the person again, or for success with their project, job search, or request.

### What Not to Say

- Don’t leave any doubt in the other person’s mind about your response; your “no” is firm and non-negotiable.
- Don’t lie. It’s too easy to be tripped up, and you’ll be more comfortable with yourself and with the other person if you ground your refusal in some version of the truth.
- Don’t offer lengthy, involved excuses and apologies; they are not persuasive, even when true. “Several excuses are always less convincing than one.” (Aldous Huxley)
- Don’t make personal remarks (about their appearance, personality, behavior, language skills) when turning down a person’s request, job application, or proposal. Even if you think it would help the person in the future, leave this kind of comment to someone else in their life.
- Don’t reply sarcastically to outrageous or inappropriate requests. It does you no good and angers the other person.

### Tips on Writing

- Respond promptly. “The prompter the refusal, the less the disappointment.” (Publilius Syrus) In addition, most people asking for something or inviting you to an event need to know soon. By giving your refusal early, you allow them time to find another solution or invitee.

- Be tactful. Avoid basing your refusal on the other person’s résumé, program, invitation. Phrase it instead in terms of some inability or requirement on your part (“need someone who is bonded”; “another meeting that day”; “will be out of town”; or simply “will be unable to help”).

- Give your excuse before your refusal. The reader is thus prepared and the disappointment at your “no” doesn’t keep them from “hearing” your reasons. Instead of saying, “I will not be able to attend your graduation because I’m going to be in California that week,” say, “I am going to be in California the week of June 2, which means I won’t, unfortunately, be able to attend your graduation.”

- Lessen the disappointment: offer to help at a later date; suggest someone who might be able to provide the same assistance; agree with them on some point; apologize for your inability to approve the request; indicate some benefit to them from your refusal; thank them for their interest/request/concern.

- The inimitable Miss Manners (Judith Martin) wouldn't want you to completely lessen the disappointment, however. She points out that you can't reject someone without them feeling rejected; if they don't feel rejected they don't go away. A painless rejection isn't one, so don't give false hope. She advises writing refusals that are bland, routine, and unoriginal.

- Occasionally, the way you turn down an applicant, proposal, bid, or other business matter can lead to legal problems. If you have concerns, consult with a lawyer before writing your letter.

## Special Situations

- When unable to attend, always respond with regret to an invitation marked "R.S.V.P.," "Please reply," or "Regrets only." This is mandatory, obligatory, required, compulsory, imperative, and essential. If the invitation is issued in the name of more than one person, mention all of them in your refusal and mail it either to the person listed under the R.S.V.P. or to the first name given. To decline an invitation, use the same format as the invitation itself: If it is handwritten, handwrite your reply. If business letterhead stationery is used, reply on your own business letterhead. When the invitation is worded informally, your reply is also informal. When the invitation is formal, your reply uses the same words, layout, and style as the invitation.

- White House invitations include the phone number of the Social Office where you telephone your regrets or ask how to respond to the invitation. General guidelines are: reply within a day of receiving the invitation; write the reply yourself (don't have a secretary do it); handwrite it on plain or engraved personal stationery; use the same format and person (first person or third person) as the invitation. There are only four generally accepted excuses for not accepting a White House invitation: a death in the family, a family wedding, prior travel plans, illness. Your reply says, "We regret that owing to the illness/ recent death of..."

- When turning down an applicant for a position, include: your thanks for the person's application; a simple statement saying that you are unable to offer the person the position; if necessary or helpful, an explanation of the decision; positive comments on the person's credentials, abilities, interview, résumé; if applicable, an invitation to reapply at some later time; your good wishes for success in the person's search for a suitable position. Some companies don't notify a job-seeker

whose application is unsuccessful. However, it is courteous as well as good public relations to write a brief, tactful letter. When replying to an unsolicited application, express your appreciation for thinking of your company, state that there are no positions open, offer to keep the résumé on file, and invite a later contact, if that is an option.

- When you refuse a job offer, do so with thanks and complimentary remarks about the company, your interviewer, the human resources department. Express your regret. If appropriate, tell why you made the choice you did, but phrase it in terms of your needs and not the company's deficiencies. Close on a positive note that leaves the door open for the future.

- When denying a requested promotion or raise or application for an in-house position (1) show appreciation for the employee's contributions, listing specific talents and strengths; (2) explain honestly and concretely why the request was denied; (3) offer suggestions on how the promotion or raise or other position might be obtained or, if your "no" depended on external factors (too many managers, budget shortfalls), what changes might affect a future request. The goal is to leave the employee feeling valued, motivated, and encouraged.

- Refuse an adjustment or claims request in a way that maximizes the chances of keeping the customer. Be tactful and considerate. Offer an alternative or compromise solution when possible. Tell the customer that you understand their position, that their complaint has been given every consideration, and that you wish you could say "yes." Then give a credible explanation of your "no." Use facts or copies of documents to show that an adjustment is not warranted. Most customers are satisfied with a brief, clearly written refusal. A few will write back and argue, point by point. When that happens, write a firm "no" with no further explanations.

- Many companies and government agencies have codified procedures for handling bids. When you have a choice, notify bidders of your requirements as soon as possible. In rejecting bids, be courteous and supportive, and, when possible, explain briefly why the bid was rejected (especially if it concerned failure to follow directives or to stay within certain guidelines) or why the winning bid was accepted. Information like this is useful to your contractors. Close with an expression of appreciation and a reference to the possibility of doing business with them at a later date. You do not need to name the winning bidder.

- When refusing a request for credit or a loan, be tactful; the person is still a customer, a potential customer, or a friend. Thank the person for applying or asking. Express appreciation of the interest in your company or faith in your friendship. In the case of an application for a commercial loan or commercial credit, tell how you arrived at your decision (the application, employer's recommendation, background check, credit bureau file). Suggest ways of improving an applicant's credit standing, alternative sources of credit, or re-applying to you

after a certain period of time or after resolving certain financial problems. In the case of a personal loan, omit the advice and simply state that you're unable to help at this time.

- Most manuscript rejections are made with form postcards or letters. Few are as witty as Samuel Johnson's: "Your manuscript is both good and original; but the part that is good is not original, and the part that is original is not good." When you write a personal letter, emphasize that the rejection is based on the needs and interests of your publishing house and that the situation at another publisher might be different. Assure the person that you've carefully considered the work, offer thanks for thinking of you, and send your good wishes for success in future endeavors.

- Most fundraising appeals are mass-produced and you will not reply if you are uninterested. However, when you receive a personal letter with first-class postage, written over the signature of someone known to you, you might want to respond. Compliment the person on the work the organization is doing, give a plausible excuse for not contributing, and offer good wishes. You don't have to give any more detail than you choose; a vague statement that you are currently overcommitted elsewhere is fine. If you are refusing because you disagree with the organization's goals or policies, say so.

- When terminating a business relationship, friendship, or dating relationship, aim for a no-fault "divorce": don't blame the other person or bring up past grievances. Help the other person save face by taking responsibility for the separation on yourself. Be as honest as is consistent with tact and kindness. Above all, be brief and unequivocal; over-explaining or "keeping your options open" can be fatal if you sincerely want to end the relationship. Conclude with an encouraging, complimentary remark.

- Sometimes people are extremely persistent about wanting your company, your time, your money. When refusing their requests, your note is firm, simple, and unequivocal (the moment you waffle, they are back in the door). Give no explanations for your refusal ("I am sorry but I will not be able to" is sufficient). The moment you tell why you're refusing ("I'm very busy just now"), there will be an immediate response ("It will only take a minute"). When you offer another reason, there will be another rebuttal. Engaging you in wearying debate is part of the strategy; you wouldn't be the first person to say "yes" just to avoid being harangued. "I'm sorry, but no," repeated as many times as it takes, is the most effective response.

- Sometimes you must refuse a gift—in business, for example, when you are offered an unacceptably expensive gift or the acceptance of gifts isn't allowed by your organization. Express your gratitude for the person's thoughtfulness and for the choice of gift. Explain why you must return it ("Employees are prohibited from accepting gifts from suppliers" or "I hope you will understand, but I would feel un-

comfortable accepting such an expensive gift from a client”). Word your refusal so that it does not imply the person was guilty of poor judgment in offering the gift.

## Format

- Business letters of refusal are typed on letterhead stationery.
- Personal letters of refusal are most often handwritten.
- Form letters are used for routine refusals.
- You may e-mail your rejection of queries, suggestions, or requests that were made by e-mail.

## WORDS

awkward	contraindicated	decline	difficult
dilemma	doubtful	impossible	impractical
obstacle	overextended	overstocked	regretfully
reject	reluctantly	respond	unable
unavailable	unfeasible	unfortunately	unlikely

## PHRASES

after much discussion/careful evaluation	although I am sympathetic to your problem/plight/situation
although the idea is appealing	appreciate your asking me/us, but
because of prior commitments	beyond the scope of the present study
company policy prohibits us from difficult decision	current conditions do not warrant disinclined at this time
doesn't qualify/warrant	don't have enough information
due to present budget problems	hope this will be of some help even though
I appreciate your asking me, but	if it were possible
I know how understanding you are, so I'm sure	I'm sorry to tell you
I must say no to	I regret that I cannot accept
it is, unfortunately, out of the question that	it's a wonderful program, but

it's currently impossible  
I would like to help, but

normally I would be delighted, but  
not an option at the moment  
no, thank you

previous commitments  
regret to inform you  
runs counter to  
sorry about this, but

we appreciate your interest, but  
we have concluded with regret  
your idea has merit, but

I wish I could say yes, but  
must decline/demur/pass  
up/withdraw from/say no to

not a choice I can make right now  
not currently seeking  
not interested at this time  
puts me in something of a dilemma  
remain unconvinced of the value of  
sincerely regret

unable to help/com-  
ply/grant/send/contribute/of-  
fer/provide

we find that we cannot  
we have now had a chance to review

## SENTENCES

Although we appreciate your interest in Dempsey Toys, we do not feel that your product is one we could successfully market.

Although your entry did not win, we wish you good luck and many future successes.

At this time there does not appear to be a position with us that is suited to your admittedly fine qualifications.

Fundraising is not one of my talents—is there anything else I could do for the committee?

I appreciate your offer but I want to try a few things before I go outside the firm for a solution.

I don't think this will work for us.

If you re-read your contract, specifically clause C1, you will see that we have no legal obligations in this regard.

I have taken on more projects than I can comfortably handle.

I hope this will help you understand why we are unable to furnish the additional funding you are requesting.

I know we'll be missing a wonderful time.

I'm sorry not to be able to give you the reference you requested in your letter of November 3.



I regret that I'm unable to accept your kind invitation—I will be out of town that evening.

I sympathize with your request and wish I could help.

It's possible we would be interested sometime after the first of the year.

I wish I could be more helpful, but it's not possible now.

I wish I didn't have to refuse you, Jerry, but I'm not in a position to make you the loan.

May I take a raincheck?

Our present schedule is, unfortunately, inflexible.

Regarding your request to use my name in your fundraising literature, I must say no.

Thank you, but we have had a regular purchasing arrangement with Burnside Office Supplies for many years.

The Board has, unfortunately, turned down your request.

The position at Locksley International for which you applied has been filled.

Unfortunately, this is not a priority for Pettifer Grains at this time.

We appreciate your asking us, and hope that we will have the opportunity of saying "yes" some other time.

We are unable to approve your loan application at this time.

We have decided to accept another proposal.

We have reviewed your credit application and regret to inform you that we are unable to offer you a bank card at this time.

We regret that your work was not selected for inclusion in the symposium.

We regret to inform you that Spenslow Paint & Tile is no longer considering applications for its sales positions.

We regret to say that a careful examination of your résumé does not indicate a particular match for our present needs.

Your request comes at a particularly difficult time for me—I'm overscheduled for the next two months.

## PARAGRAPHS

Dr. Gerda Torp regrets that because of a previous engagement she is unable to accept the kind invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Esdras B. Longer for Sunday, the third of June, at 8:00 p.m.

Thank you for your invitation to join Glowry Health Services as a pharmacy technician. The beautiful new facilities, the friendly staff members, and the good interview I had with you were all very persuasive. However, I have also been offered a position forty-five minutes closer to home. To have more time with my family, I plan to accept it. I

thank you for your time, attention, and good humor. I hope our paths cross again someday.

Because we are financially committed to several charities similar to yours, we are unable to send you anything. However, please accept our best wishes for successful continuation and funding of your work—we certainly appreciate and admire what you're doing.

I've checked our production schedule and see no way of moving up your deliveries by two weeks. We are dependent on materials shipped to us by suppliers in other states who are unable to alter their timetables.

For a number of reasons, I am uneasy about writing you a letter of introduction to Sir Harrison Peters. I have discussed it with my superior, who would prefer that you find some other avenue of contact. I hope you understand.

We've just received your kind letter inviting us to Howards End. You can imagine how we'd enjoy seeing you again. However, Julia is graduating from college that weekend, so we have to say no this time. Thanks so much for thinking of us.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Dean Arabin:

I regret that I am unable to represent Barchester College at the inauguration of Dr. Eleanor Bold as new president of Century College on September 16. I was unable to reschedule a previous commitment for that day.

My wife is a graduate of Century, so I would have particularly enjoyed being part of the ceremony. Thank you for thinking of me. I was honored to be asked to represent the College and would be glad to be of service at some other time.

I hope you are able to make other arrangements.

Sincerely,

TO: Friends of the Library Committee

Thank you for your kind letter asking me to direct the annual fundraiser. I am flattered that you thought of me.

Because of several other time-consuming commitments, I am unable to accept your invitation. I would have enjoyed working with you and contributing in some way to our fine library system, but I feel sure that you will find the right person for this important project.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

Dear Tony Crispyn:

Thank you for submitting your work to us. As editors of the *Windsor*

*Castle Review*, we have given your material careful consideration; every manuscript submitted to this office is read by one or more of us.

We regret that “The Ninth Son” is not suited to the current needs of the magazine, but we wish to thank you for having given us the opportunity of reading it. Unfortunately, the volume of submissions and the press of other editorial responsibilities do not permit us to make individual comments or suggestions.

Sincerely,

Dear Margaret Ivory,

We have appreciated having you as a patient these last two years. At this time, however, we feel that your best interests are not served by continuing treatment in this office. We would like to recommend that you make an appointment with Dr. Royde-Smith, Dr. Owen, or a dentist of your choice. We will be happy to send along your dental records, including X-rays.

Let us know how we can facilitate this change in caregivers.

Dear Chris and David,

Thank you for sending us the information on your real estate trust investment opportunity.

Although it looks appealing, this is not something we are prepared to get into at the moment. I sent the prospectus on to my brother in Denver. It’s possible he would be interested.

I’m sure you will find all the capital you need, and I wish you every success.

Best wishes,

Dear Mrs. Lanier,

We at Parker Investment Mortgage, Inc. understand and appreciate how difficult this past year must have been for you.

However, given your history of missed payments (June 2001, September 2001, November 2001, and February, March, and April 2002), the fact that your account is now three months past due, and our inability to arrange a meeting with you to discuss solutions, we are unable to grant you any additional time.

Unless we receive your unpaid balance by May 15, you will receive a foreclosure notice.

Sincerely,

See also: APPOINTMENTS, CREDIT, DISAGREEMENT, RESPONSES, SENSITIVE.

# Reports and Proposals

*It may be said of me by Harper & Brothers, that although I reject their proposals, I welcome their advances.*

—EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

Standard proposals and reports aren't letters, but shorter ones are sometimes written as letters or memos. They use plainer language, do not have heads, subheads, and clauses, and are less formal and less complicated.

Proposals can be solicited (someone asks you for an estimate, bid, plan of action) or unsolicited (you want to sell your plan or service or program to someone who has not expressed a need for it). In either case, your proposal is a sales tool to persuade the other party that you are the best firm for the job (for a solicited proposal) or that it needs the service you are offering (for an unsolicited proposal).

## Report and Proposal Letters Include

- acceptance of proposal/bid
- acknowledgment of receipt (see ACKNOWLEDGMENTS)
- bids and estimates
- book and article proposals (see QUERIES)
- compliance reports to government agencies
- credit reports (see CREDIT)
- investigative reports
- management, staff, policy, or recommendation reports
- progress/status reports
- proposals: products/grants/projects/programs/sales/services
- recommendations/suggestions
- rejection of proposal/bid/report (see REFUSALS)
- reports: annual/monthly/progress/management/staff/technical
- responses to inquiries/requests
- sales reports: weekly/monthly/annual

## How to Say It

- Begin with a reference line that identifies the subject of the proposal or report.
- State why you are sending the report or proposal (“as requested,” “for your information,” “Charles O’Malley asked me to send you a copy,” “in response to your request for a quotation”).
- Describe the report in one or two sentences.
- The main body of the report or proposal—explaining the idea in detail, giving costs, specifications, deadlines, and examples of application—is organized into clear, logical units of information.
- Summarize the report in one or two sentences.
- Credit those who worked on the report or proposal.
- Offer to provide additional information and give the name and telephone number of the contact person.
- Tell what the next step is or what your expectations are (“call me,” “sign the enclosed contract,” “please respond with a written evaluation of the proposal”).
- Thank the person for their time and consideration.

## What Not to Say

- Don’t include other topics or business. The report or proposal is a focused document.
- Don’t use jargon unless you’re sure it’s familiar to your readers.

## Tips on Writing

- Before preparing a report or proposal, know the answers to these questions: Who will read the document? What is its purpose? What material will it cover? How will the material be presented?
- The main body of a letter proposal or report can be as short as a paragraph or long enough to be divided into one or more of the traditional report elements: title page; summary, synopsis, or abstract; a foreword, preface, introduction, history or background; acknowledgments; table of contents; a presentation of data, options, conclusions, and recommendations; appendix, bibliography, endnotes, references, and notice of any attached supporting documents.
- Before mailing the proposal or report, ask someone knowledgeable about the issues (in some cases a lawyer) to read it for clarity and precision. Double-check a proposal to be certain that every item in the original request has been responded to.
- If timing is important to your report or proposal, send it return receipt requested so you can verify the date it was received.

## Special Situations

- When writing grant proposals, three guidelines will boost your chances of success: (1) follow directions scrupulously—no allowances are made for deviations from stated formats; (2) present your material faultlessly—neatly typed on high-quality paper, error-free, well spaced; (3) the content must be your finest writing and slanted specifically to that funding organization—the identical material can seldom be proposed to two different groups. Artist resource groups offer help to grant applicants, and sometimes people in your field will critique your material.

- Many progress reports have a codified format, but others may be written in narrative letter form. Include: what has been done during the reporting period; what is currently being done; what outstanding projects are waiting for attention; good news and bad news during the reporting period; other comments that give readers an appreciation of the progress of the student, employee, department, or company.

- If it appears that your proposal will be acceptable to the other party, turn the proposal letter into a contract letter or binding agreement by adding at the bottom, “Read and approved on [date] by [signature and title].” If the proposal is part of a larger contract, add “pursuant to the Master Contract dated March 2, 2002, between Raikes Engineering and Phillips Contractors” (see also CONTRACTS).

## Format

- Report or proposal letters are typewritten on letterhead or memo stationery.

- When time is an issue, reports and proposals can be faxed or e-mailed, but send hard copies too.

- Forms with blanks to be filled in are convenient for credit reports, school progress reports, routine production reports, and other reports that depend on numbers or short descriptions.

## WORDS

abstract	advise	agenda	analysis
applications	appraise	approach	assess
calculate	compute	conclude	conditions
consider	critique	decision	design
diagram	disclose	discussion	display
draft	establish	estimate	evaluate

exhibit	explanation	exploration	exposition
findings	forecast	gauge	guesstimate
inquiry	inspect	instruction	introduce
investigation	issue	judge	layout
method	monograph	notification	offer
opinion	outcome	outline	performance
policy	preface	preliminary	presentation
procedure	program	project	projections
prospectus	recommendation	representation	research
results	review	statement	strategy
study	subject	suggest	summary
system	technical	terms	text
undertaking	venture		

## PHRASES

a considerable/significant/important advantage	address the problem of
along these lines	as you can see from the data
ballpark figure	close/exhaustive inquiry
copy of the proceedings	detailed statement
educated guess	estimated value
give our position on	gives me to understand
in-depth account of/look at	institute inquiries
make inquiry/known/public	map out
matter at hand/in dispute/under discussion/at issue	planning stages
plan of action	position paper
rough computation/calculation/draft/guess	subject of inquiry
summarizes the progress of	supplies/offers/provides some distinct advantages
take into consideration	take measures/steps
under consideration/discussion	

## SENTENCES

Data on in-line skating injuries in the United States during the past two years are charted below.

I propose that we set up a subcommittee to study flex-hours for all salaried employees.

Our annual report on homelessness in the six-county metro area reveals both good news and bad news.

Re: Acquisition of the Cypress Spa Products Corp.

Sperrit-Midmore Landscape Supply Center has had one of its most successful quarters ever—see below for details.

Subject: Proposed staffing changes in conference catering.

The following report was prepared by Robert Famish and Narcissa Topehall.

This report summarizes your benefits and any optional coverage you have chosen as of January 1.

## PARAGRAPHS

A citizen task force composed of interested persons was formed last May and met almost the entire year to make recommendations to the Planning Commission, which, in turn, made its report to the City Council. Their report is summarized here.

Since our letter of September 3, in which we compared electroplating and sputtering for production of thin alloy films for recording, we have done some additional research on this subject. We have found that as long as the proper microstructure is achieved, both electroplating and sputtering are effective. It appears too early to exclude either of the processes. It may be helpful, however, to do a rough cost analysis either as more data from research in these two areas become available or by making a number of assumptions.

I've checked into the matter of buying versus renting an air compressor, and it seems far more cost-effective in the long run and convenient for us in the short run to buy a small portable air compressor rather than to rent one as needed. A study of our use of an air compressor suggests that although we need one only "infrequently," the rental charges and lost productive time in not having one immediately available outweigh the cost of a new one. I suggest buying.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Etta,

Re: Proposed Budget for Design of Streets DRS-821.01

We have estimated the design cost to produce final plans for the relo-



cation of Concannon Street from the bypass to the railroad tracks, and for Concannon Bypass from Blake Avenue to Nicholas. The design of Concannon Street is for a length of approximately 2,000 feet and consists of five traffic lanes, curb and gutter, and a raised median over 25% of its length. The Concannon Bypass design covers approximately 2,500 feet and includes curb and gutter along the outside lanes and median, pavement widening, intersection improvements, acceleration and deceleration lanes, and signals at three locations. The cost works out to \$55,000, and we therefore propose that a budget for this amount be approved.

Please call me if you have any questions concerning our estimate. Thanks.

Sincerely,

To: Marketing Department  
From: Stephen Rollo  
Date: March 4, 2002  
Re: Report on recent drop in sales

This memo report will serve as a summary of the attached 12-page in-depth report on what appear to be the mechanisms and underlying causes of the recent nationwide drop in sales at our restaurant equipment and supply outlets.

Based on these ideas, I'm planning experimental modifications to our outlets in Colorado Springs and Denver. If you have opinions on these ideas (especially if you disagree), I'd appreciate hearing from you.

The driving forces for sales to restaurants are of course need, immediate availability, accessibility, and price. We have isolated price as the critical factor in the recent downturn. Although our prices are, in fact, competitive with other suppliers, our prices do not *appear* to be competitive.

The report details the three potential ways of dealing with the perception that we are more expensive than our competitors. Please reflect, both individually and in groups, on our choices.

I will let you know the results of the planned changes in Del Mar and San Diego. In the meantime, I would appreciate getting as much feedback as possible (and as quickly as possible) on the attached report.

Proposal

Marryat Insulation Systems, Inc.

54 Easthupp Boulevard  
Frederick, IA 50501

*Proposed work:*

- Install fiberglass under boards in 900 sq. ft. attic area of two-story house.
- Remove and replace necessary boards.
- Install wind tunnels.
- Install 2 R-61 roof vents.
- Install fiberglass in sidewalls, approx. 2000 sq. ft.
- Drill siding and redwood plug, chisel and putty, owner to sand and paint.
- Remove and replace siding, drill above second floor windows only.
- Install 4 8" x 16" soffit vents, 2 front, 2 rear.

We propose hereby to furnish material and labor—complete in accordance with above specifications—for the sum of cash on completion, \$2307.

All material is guaranteed to be as specified. All work to be completed according to standard practices. Any alteration or deviation from the above specifications involving extra costs will be executed only upon written orders, and will become an extra charge over and above the estimate. All agreements are contingent upon strikes, accidents, or delays beyond our control. Owner to carry fire, tornado, and other necessary insurance. Our work is fully covered by Worker's Compensation Insurance.

Note: This proposal may be withdrawn by us if not accepted within 10 days.

Date: May 3, 2003  
Authorized signature: F. Marryat

Acceptance of proposal: The above prices, specifications, and conditions are satisfactory and are hereby accepted. You are authorized to do the work as specified. Payment will be made upon completion.

Date of acceptance: May 6, 2003  
Signature: Jack Easy

See also: ACCEPTANCES, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, COVER LETTERS, CREDIT, INSTRUCTIONS, MEMOS, REFERENCES, REFUSALS, RESPONSES, SALES.

# Requests and Inquiries

*Know how to ask. There is nothing more difficult  
for some people, nor, for others, easier.*

—BALTASAR GRACIÁN

Letters of request (when you want to ask for something) and letters of inquiry (when you want to know something) are critical in maintaining the flow of ideas and resources among individuals and organizations. Because they are often the first contact between businesses and potential customers, between those seeking something and the employers, publishers, and vendors they are seeking it from, these letters must be good ambassadors.

Most commonplace requests (to change a life insurance beneficiary, to claim insurance benefits, to apply for a VA loan, to purchase a home, for federal employment) are initiated by a phone call and completed with the appropriate forms. Only in the case of problems are letters required.

## Write Letters of Request/Inquiry When You Want

- adjustments (see COMPLAINTS)
- advice (see ADVICE)
- appointments/meetings/interviews (see APPLICATIONS, APPOINTMENTS, EMPLOYMENT, RESUMES)
- assistance: business/personal
- bids and estimates
- contributions/donations (see FUNDRAISING)
- credit information (see CREDIT)
- documents or copies of business/personal records
- donation (see FUNDRAISING)
- extension of deadline
- favors: business/personal
- forgiveness (see APOLOGIES)
- goods/services: prices/samples/information/brochures/product literature
- information/explanations/instructions
- introductions (see INTRODUCTIONS)
- loan (see CREDIT)

- payment (see COLLECTION, CREDIT)
- permission to reprint/use copyrighted material
- raise in salary (see EMPLOYMENT)
- reservation (see TRAVEL)
- speakers for your conference/banquet/workshop
- to borrow money (see CREDIT)
- to check on an unacknowledged gift (see FOLLOW-UP)
- to interview for a job (see APPLICATIONS, COVER LETTERS)
- to learn if a company has job openings
- to query an editor about a book or article idea (see QUERIES)
- zoning changes

### How to Say It

- State clearly and briefly what you're requesting, beginning with a courteous phrase like "Please send me..." or "May I please have..."
- Give details to help the person send you exactly what you want (reference numbers, dates, descriptions, titles).
- If appropriate, and if it will help the person furnish you more precisely with what you need, briefly explain the use you intend to make of the material. (When writing the county pathologist for information on procedures in a murder case, it helps the person to know that you are a mystery writer looking for background rather than a prosecutor building a case or a physician in search of medical details.)
- State the specific action or response you want from your reader.
- Explain why your reader might want to respond to your request. "The best way to get on in the world is to make people believe it's to their advantage to help you." (La Bruyère)
- If appropriate, offer to cover costs of photocopying, postage, or fees.
- Specify the date by which you need a response.
- At the end, if your letter is a long one, restate your request.
- Express your thanks or appreciation for the other person's time and attention and close with a confident statement that the other person will respond positively.
- Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE), if appropriate. Otherwise, tell where to send the information or where to telephone, fax, or e-mail the response.

### What Not to Say

- Don't simply request "information." Be specific. Some companies have hundreds of brochures dealing with their products and services. A vague request for "information" may or may not net you what you need. If you don't know what other information might be

available or useful, add, "I would appreciate any other information you think might be helpful."

- Don't be apologetic (unless your request is time-consuming or difficult to supply). Avoid phrases like "I hope this is not too much trouble" and "I'm sorry to inconvenience you." Indicate in passing your respect for the other person's time, talents, and resources ("I know how busy you are") but don't dwell on the negative. Everyone has requests, and the more matter-of-fact and courteous you are, the better your chances of getting a positive reply.
- Avoid a highhanded approach that implies you are entitled to the information, service, or favor. You are making a request, not a demand.

## Tips on Writing

- Be brief, avoiding unnecessary explanations or asking the same question in two different ways. Reread your letter to see if your questions are easy to answer. Most people sitting at information-supplying desks have too much mail and too little time.

- Use a subject line to quickly orient your reader: "Subject: cellular phone service"; "Subject: horse transporting"; "Re: piano tuning rates"; "Subject: airbag safety information"; "Re: mountaineering and ice climbing expeditions in North America"; "Subject: recipes using cranberries." For simple, businesslike requests, no salutation is necessary; the subject line can stand alone.

When you have several requests, number and place each one on a separate line (from most to least important) so that the recipient can tick off each item as it is responded to.

- Be precise about the information you want: mailing instructions for the return of a hard drive, how to petition a county court for a legal name change, availability and rates for the high season, absentee figures for the period January 1 to June 30. The more information you give, the more helpful is the information you receive.

- Several letterwriting authorities advise not to end a letter of request with "thank you" or "thanking you in advance" (because these expressions seem to signal an end to the exchange), but both have become common and acceptable in current usage. Some people like the brisk wrap-up sound of it and use it automatically. You can also end with "I appreciate your time and attention" or "I look forward to hearing from you."

- Make it easy for someone to respond to you: enclose a survey or questionnaire; provide a postage-paid postcard printed with a message and fill-in blanks; leave space under each question on your letter so the person can jot down replies and return it in the accompanying SASE. When the other person is doing you a favor, and one of you

must bear the cost of postage, materials, or other assistance, it is, of course, you who should offer to pay. Include a SASE when asking someone to make an effort on your behalf. When requesting information of companies who hope to make a sale to you, this is unnecessary.

## Special Situations

- When writing to ask if an unacknowledged gift was received, describe the item, tell when you sent it, and offer a face-saving excuse for the person (“I know you are especially busy just now”). You might say you’re inquiring because you insured the package and if it did not arrive, you want to follow up on it, or that you are wondering if you should put a “stop” order on the check. You’re not required to give a reason for your inquiry, but doing so is tactful.

- When requesting reservations for facilities for conferences, meetings, sales presentations, and other business activities, begin your inquiries with a telephone call to determine rates, date availability, and description of facilities. When writing to confirm your arrangements, include: time, date, number of expected attendees, required equipment and supplies, refreshment arrangements, billing information, name of contact person in your organization (if not you), and any other agreed-upon items.

- When requesting a pay raise in writing (as opposed to an interview), begin by identifying your position in the company and the amount of raise you want. List your reasons for thinking a raise is appropriate: longer hours, more responsibility, work successes, noteworthy results, new skills. Whenever possible, use figures (“increase of 10%”). Emphasize the work you’ve done since your last pay raise. It is not productive to point to other people in the department who do less than you and are better compensated. Repeat your strongest argument and close with good wishes and an expression of appreciation.

- To request a copy of your military record, write: Personnel Records Officer, National Personnel Records Center, 9700 Page Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63132-5100. Begin with a subject line that gives your service or social security number. State what you need (“discharge papers”) and, if appropriate, why you need them or no longer have your copy of them. Give your mailing address and daytime phone number.

- Your letter requesting a zoning change will become part of the public record, so it must be factual, accurate, unemotional, and businesslike. State your reasons for requesting the change, modification, or variance. Include as much information as you can showing that, first, a zoning change will not harm the environs and, second, that it has potential benefits. Attach statements from neighbors, petitions, assessments, and other documents that bear on the issue.

- When requesting your physician to release your medical records to another physician, hospital, or insurance company, write: “Dear Dr. [name], I hereby authorize you to release my medical file to [name of recipient]. I will appreciate this being done as soon as possible. Thank you.”

- When requesting permission to reprint copyrighted material, make it easy to say “yes.” Include two copies of either a form or your letter so that the person can sign and date them and return one to you. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope. State precisely what you want to use (title of book or article, page numbers, line or paragraph numbers, and a photocopy of the excerpted material). Tell how you plan to use the material (the name of your book or article, approximate publication date, publisher, price, expected number of copies to be printed, whether you want U.S. or world rights, and anything else that describes the anticipated audience and distribution). Include the credit line you will be using, and ask for their approval of it. Express your appreciation for considering the permissions request and, if you wish, your admiration for the person’s work.

- When asking someone to speak at your meeting or conference, give the following information: your organization’s name; date, time, and place of the event, with directions or a map; desired length and subject of the talk; the reason or focus for the event; a description of the group’s interests and backgrounds to give the speaker some sense of the audience; an estimate of the size of the audience; your expectations of when the speaker would arrive and depart; whether you are paying a fee and the speaker’s travel expenses and lodgings; what equipment (microphone, overhead projector) is available; the name and phone number of a contact person (if this is not you).

- When requesting estimates, bids, proposals, or price quotes, be specific: quantities, deadlines (for bid and for completion of work); special requirements; types, model numbers, colors; a list of everything you expect to be included in the total. To ensure that no important consideration is omitted, use the eventual contract that will be offered as a model for your letter.

- To compare different services (office maintenance, lawn care, driving schools, carpet cleaning) send the same letter requesting information to all such services in your area.

## Format

- Business requests that go outside the company are typed, usually on letterhead stationery. Memo paper is used for routine in-house requests.

- Personal requests may be typed or handwritten on business or personal stationery. The more personal the request (advice, favors),

the more suitable it is to handwrite the note on a foldover or personal stationery.

- Postcards are useful for one-line requests.
- If you make the same type of request repeatedly, use a form letter or memo paper with blank space to fill in the title of the article or sample you're requesting.
- E-mail is often used to make requests of companies with websites and can be used for some casual or routine requests.

## WORDS

appeal	assistance	brochures	expedite
favor	furnish	generous	grant
grateful	immediately	information	inquiry
instructions	products	prompt	problem
query	question	questionnaire	quickly
refer	require	rush	reconsider
seek	solicit	urgent	

## PHRASES

additional information/time	answer the following questions
anticipate a favorable response	apply/ask for
appreciate any information/your cooperation/your help	as soon as possible
by return mail	count on/upon
direct me to the appropriate agency	have the goodness to
hope you are able to	I'd appreciate having/receiving/obtaining
if you can find time in your busy schedule to	if you think it might be possible
I'm writing to ask you	institute inquiries
interested in receiving information/learning more about	it would be most helpful
I would appreciate your assessment Of	I would be grateful/most grateful if/for
look forward to hearing from you	offer some assistance
of great help to us	on account of/belief of



please call me to discuss	please let me have your estimate by
please provide us with/send details about	please reply by
reply by return mail	respectfully request
take into consideration	thank you for your efforts in/to
trouble you to/for	we would appreciate your taking a few minutes to
would you be willing to/good enough to	your considered opinion

## SENTENCES

Can you tell me which government agency might be able to give me background information on Minamata disease in Japan?

Do you remember that you once offered to lend me Grandma's pearl ring for a special occasion?

Enclosed is a self-addressed stamped envelope/an International Reply Coupon for your reply.

How can a private citizen be named to the task force on the Resolution Trust Corporation?

I am preparing a report for which I need annualized total returns for one, three, and five years through December 31—can you provide these by March 15?

I'd like to know how one goes about getting on your talk show.

I have a favor to ask you, but I take "no" very well!

I'm wondering if you have the time to give us a little guidance.

Is it true that it's possible to have stars named for people and, if so, how does one go about it?

I would be interested in seeing some of the material that went into the preparation of your most recent occupational titles handbook.

May I use your name as a reference when applying for a cashier position with Mawson's Country Inn?

Please forward this letter to the appropriate person.

Please send me any literature you have on antioxidant vitamins.

This is a formal request to you to make some other arrangements for your cats; your lease clearly states that animals are not allowed in the building.

We are contacting several industrial window cleaning firms to invite estimates.

We do not understand footnote (b) of Exhibit H—could you please explain it?

Will you please send me a copy of your current foam and sponge rubber products catalog along with information on bulk order discounts?

Will you please send me a list of those trash haulers in Willard County that contract by volume rather than by flat fee?

Your order forms, prices, and ordering instructions are oriented toward institutions—can you tell me how an individual can obtain your materials?

## PARAGRAPHS

The flyer that came with this month's telephone bill describes a telephone answering system that is available for \$8.95 per month. It is not clear to me whether this is an outright purchase (if so, how many months of payment are involved?) or a lease arrangement. Please send me complete information.

The Pallant County Arts Board is attempting to determine whether it is meeting the needs of county artists, writers, playwrights, and musicians. Would you be so kind as to take a few minutes to fill out the enclosed questionnaire and return it to us in the self-addressed, stamped envelope? Please do not fold the questionnaire as results will be tabulated by computer.

I was unable to attend your talk on "Texture Performance of Metals" but would greatly appreciate reprints or preprints of anything you have written in this area. Thanks.

Will you please place my name on your mailing list to receive all announcements, newsletters, and information regarding business mailing regulations and tips? If you have booklets or materials of general interest, I would appreciate copies. Let me know if there is a charge. Thank you.

I'm wondering if you could give me about five minutes of your time on the phone some time next week. I am writing a research paper on global economics, and think that you may have answers to some of my questions. I found when I interviewed other people that it takes from three to five minutes—no more. If you are unable to do this, I will understand. Enclosed is a self-addressed postcard—please indicate on it a time when I could call you.

I understand that the basement meeting room of the Oakdale Community Church is available for use by various small groups. Would it be possible for our study group to meet there one evening a month? Our own church does not have any such facilities, and we have found it difficult to move around to a different home each month. We could meet on nearly any Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday evening that is convenient for you.

We have just moved to the area and are interested in changing from

our out-of-state insurance agent to someone local. Please send complete information for the following types of insurance: auto, home, whole life. We prefer that you do not follow up with a call or visit; as soon as we have studied the material, we will call you if we have questions or if we would like to schedule a meeting. Thank you.

I respectfully request to be excused from jury duty beginning Nov. 2. I am a veterinarian in a two-person practice. My partner will be in India (copies of airline tickets are attached) the entire month of November. The clinic would effectively be without a veterinarian, and I do not see how we could arrange for adequate care of our many patients during that time.

I will be calling on barbers in your area the week of June 4—June 11 to show a line of completely new Swedish barbering tools. Made of tempered steel, guaranteed for twenty years, and sold with a service contract at no extra cost, these implements have already won three first-place Mentions of Merit from the American Academy of Barbers. I would like to stop by The Hair Bear sometime during that week. Enclosed is a self-addressed, stamped postcard—please indicate a time that would be convenient for you. To thank you for your time, I will be bringing you a gift.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Axel,

I plan to be on Sanburan Island in the near future, and am wondering if you could schedule a tour for me of the Tropical Belt Coal Company. Coal is one of my hobbies.

Enclosed is a self-addressed envelope and an International Reply Coupon for your response.

Thanks so much for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Dear Mr. Babington:

I would like your permission to reprint the following material from your book,

*Diplomacy Today:*

page iv: paragraph 2: "Since 1701...and nothing was said."

page 294: final sentence: "If it appears that...only Henry VIII knows the truth."

This material would be used in my book, *The New Diplomacy*, to be published by Baines-Gandish in 2003. The book will retail for \$16.95 and is expected to have a somewhat limited market. I will send you a complimentary copy, and you would of course be given credit as follows:

*Diplomacy Today* (New York: Goddard Publishing, 1982), pp. iv, 294.  
Reprinted with permission from Spencer Babington.

I'm enclosing two copies of this letter. If you agree to grant me permission, please write "permission granted," sign and date one of the copies, and return it to me in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope.

I would appreciate being able to use those two excerpts. Your book was an eye-opener when it appeared, and it has remained a standard for me of fine writing, clear thinking, and inspired research.

Sincerely,

TO: Emmerick Demolition and Salvage

In September 2001 you submitted a bid to Brooker Real Estate to remove two structures, one at 1898 Stratfield and one at 1921 Cabell. Since that bid, two additional properties have been purchased by Brooker Real Estate that will require demolition this summer.

I invite you to submit a rebid to include the two additional sites plus tank removal at another site (please see attachment for description and addresses of sites).

Contact me if you will be submitting a bid as I would like to schedule a meeting to discuss this project further and to answer your questions.

Dear Morris,

I'm thinking of leaving Langdon Glass Works (I'll tell you why next time I see you) and am currently on the lookout for a good sales management position.

You seem to know everyone in the industry (and everybody knows you)—would you mind letting me know if you hear of any openings?

I appreciate being able to ask you this. Let's get together soon.

Sincerely,

TO: LeRoy Investment Services

Please send me information on investment opportunities for the small, independent investor. I would specifically like to know:

1. Requirements, interest rates, and other information on certificates of deposit, treasury bills, municipal bonds, mutual funds, and other investment programs.

2. The commission your company charges for handling such investments.

3. The performance records on your investment programs over the past two years.

4. The names of several people who have used your services recently.

TO: Zoning Commission

FROM: Barbara Topham

DATE: March 10, 2002

RE: Zoning File 9117, Children's Playschool

I am writing to urge you to approve the Special Condition Use Permit sought by Children's Playschool. As we live directly across the street, we would be one of those most affected, and I believe it is important for you to know that the change would not appear to adversely affect the neighborhood.

Dear Archie,

At the last meeting of the Open Door organizing committee, we discussed the need for new members. Your name came up several times as someone who has spent a good deal of time, money, and energy at the Food Shelf. We all felt you could add creativity, excitement, and inspiration to our efforts.

Would you consider a one-year commitment to the committee? This would involve one general monthly meeting, one weekly subcommittee meeting, some telephone work, and your regular weekly volunteer hours. I think you are currently spending about ten hours a week at the center. If you need to cut down on those hours to devote time to the committee, that would be fine.

Although this is something you'll need to think about, we are hoping to have your answer within the next two weeks so that we can publish the new roster in our year-end appeals. We are all hoping that you'll say "yes" but will understand if you cannot. In any case, we are grateful for the time and talent you have already given the center.

With best wishes,

TO: Metropolitan Council

I understand that you are funding a special multi-family recycling program for those who live in apartments or condominiums with twenty or more units.

I am writing on behalf of our neighborhood association, as we have a number of such buildings, and residents are interested in such a program. Please send information. We would also be interested in having someone from the Council speak at one of our meetings to explain the program.

Sincerely,

See also: APPOINTMENTS, COLLECTION, CREDIT, EMPLOYMENT, FUNDRAISING, INTRODUCTIONS, INVITATIONS, ORDERS, RESPONSES, SALES, THANK YOU, TRAVEL.

# Responses

*I was gratified to be able to answer promptly. I said I didn't know.*

—MARK TWAIN

Prompt and thoughtful responses to incoming mail may be as important to your business as your carefully drafted sales letters. They are equally rewarding in your personal life. "A prompt response is a sign of vigorous and authentic concern; nothing could be more flattering or touching to the recipient." (Jennifer Williams)

When responding with a straightforward "yes" or "no," see ACCEPTANCES or REFUSALS.

## Write Responses to

- announcements
- apologies
- complaints (see ADJUSTMENTS, APOLOGIES)
- congratulations
- expressions of sympathy
- gifts and kindnesses (see also THANK YOU)
- inquiries
- invitations (see also ACCEPTANCES, REFUSALS)
- letters addressed to someone temporarily absent
- requests: information/instructions/samples/introductions/ contributions/payments/letters of reference

## How to Say It

- In the first sentence, state what you are responding to (a letter, invitation, memo) so the other person knows immediately why you're writing. In some cases, use a reference line ("Re: Order # 2K881").
- Briefly give all requested information.
- When you cannot respond completely to a request, include names, addresses, and phone numbers where more information can be obtained.

- If immediate action is not possible, tell what is being done and by what date results can be expected.
- If appropriate, offer further assistance.
- Let the other person know you appreciate them and are pleased to be responding.
- Close with good wishes, an expression of confidence in your product or service, or a remark about future contacts.

### What Not to Say

- Don't give more information than your reader requested. In most cases, this is unnecessary and unhelpful.
- Don't misspell the other person's name. It is immediately noticed and weakens the effect of your response.
- Don't allow an irritated tone to creep in, even when you consider the letter you're responding to offensive, uninformed, or inane.

### Tips on Writing

- Respond promptly. "It should be the aim of every business office to answer all its mail the same day it is received." (Alexander L. Sheff and Edna Ingalls) That advice, written in 1942, may be an impossibility today, but it is still a good goal.
  - When responding to a number of questions or to a complicated letter, organize your letter elements by using numbers, bullets, or asterisks and leave plenty of white space.

### Special Situations

- Customer inquiries provide an unparalleled opportunity to promote your goods and services as well as your company. Handle them with the utmost respect, speed, efficiency, and good cheer—inquiries are generally forerunners of sales. Answer questions as completely as possible and enclose supplementary lists, articles, reports, brochures, flyers, or catalogs. Make it easy for the customer to follow up (place an order, find a local distributor, call a toll-free number).
  - When responding to a job offer, express pleasure in your future association with the company; say something complimentary about the job interview and interviewer; restate, when appropriate, the conditions of employment; renew your confidence that you and the company are a good match; thank the person. Sometimes your response is a qualified one; you want the position but cannot accept some condition of employment (hours, salary, vacation time). Explain that they

are your first choice except for that issue; can anything be done about it?

- Response to an invitation marked “R.S.V.P.” or “Please reply” is mandatory, obligatory, required, compulsory, imperative, and essential. If you do not plan to attend, the same is true for “Regrets only.” If your invitation includes no R.S.V.P., no “Regrets only,” and no reply card, you need not respond. This type of invitation is used for large affairs—political gatherings, fundraising events, business cocktail parties, conventions. Guidelines for responding to an invitation: Reply within several days of receiving it. State clearly that you will or will not be able to attend. Mirror the invitation, using the same format, and almost all the same words. If you have cards with your name or personalized stationery, you can simply write under your name “accepts with pleasure the kind invitation of...” and repeat the kind of event, time, date, and place.

- Invitations (wedding, bar mitzvah, bat mitzvah) and announcements (engagement, graduation, birth, adoption) require a response (letter or congratulatory card with handwritten note), but if you don’t attend the event or celebration you aren’t expected to send a gift.

- Expressions of condolence require a response, which can take a number of forms, from handwritten formal notes of thanks (see THANK YOU) to printed newspaper announcements of appreciation (see ANNOUNCEMENTS). In the case of a public figure, printed acknowledgments can be sent to large numbers of people who were not personally known to the family (see ACKNOWLEDGMENTS). Responses may be brief, may be sent up to six weeks following the funeral, and may be written by someone on behalf of the person closest to the deceased.

- Responding to fundraising appeals does not often involve a letter, or even a comment from you; most organizations simply want your check, which you tuck into the provided envelope. If you write a letter, mention the sum you’re donating, ask for a receipt (for tax purposes) if you wish, and attach a completed matching gift form if your employer participates in this program. If you are not familiar with the sponsoring organization, you can obtain (free) up to three reports on individual agencies by writing: National Charities Information Bureau, 19 Union Square West, New York, NYC 10003-3395. Enclose a # 10 self-addressed stamped envelope as it’s a nonprofit organization. You can also visit them online at [www.give.org](http://www.give.org).

- Respond to an apology if only to acknowledge that you received it. What you do after that is your choice. “The person who can meet an apology more than halfway and forgive with a graciousness that makes the aggressor feel almost glad that the trouble occurred, but very certain that it shall never occur again, is the one who will make beautiful and lifelong friendships.” (Julia W. Wolfe)

- Birth and adoption announcements are responded to with cards



or letters of congratulations. When writing about a child born with defects or a disability, avoid inappropriate or overly sympathetic remarks. Although this situation can entail difficulties and grief, it does not call for a sympathy letter. Until you know how the parents are feeling (devastated, concerned but basically optimistic, happy to have the child), do not reveal your own feelings—they may be wide of the mark. Do not write: “You’re not going to keep it, are you?” “I think you should sue the hospital.” “Is one of you a carrier for this?” “Maybe the baby won’t live; that would be best all around.” “Whose fault was it?” “Did you drink while you were pregnant?” “I guess it could have been worse.” “God only sends burdens to those who can bear them.” Instead, say that you’ve heard that they have a new little one and that you’re thinking of them. You may want to avoid commercial “new baby” cards. Later, when you know how the parents are feeling, you can respond on a more emotional level.

- In responding to flattering and enthusiastic congratulatory messages, say “thank you” first of all. Then be gracious. “A compliment is a gift, not to be thrown away carelessly unless you want to hurt the giver.” (Eleanor Hamilton) Reflect the compliment back to the giver (“how nice of you to write,” “your letter touched me,” “how thoughtful of you”).

- When asked what you or someone close to you would like for a graduation, anniversary, birthday, or holiday gift, mention a broad gift category (“books,” for example, but not “money”) that will provide a range of prices for the giver.

## Format

- Choosing a format for a letter or note of response is simple: do as you were done unto. If the original letter was typed, type yours; if it was handwritten, handwrite yours. If the invitation was formal, your response should be written in the third-person formal manner. If it was informal, first-person style on personal stationery, you respond similarly.

- If you use formal notes engraved or printed with your name, respond to invitations by penning in “accepts with pleasure” or “declines with regret” under your name. Add the date so that your recipient knows which invitation you’re responding to.

- Forms are useful in responding to routine inquiries. Requests for information, materials, or samples can be handled with a printed card saying, “This comes to you at your request” or “Thank you for your inquiry. Enclosed are informational materials.” Or, design a brief, general form letter that thanks the person for the inquiry and indicates what information is being forwarded. Include a checklist of publications so you can indicate those that you are enclosing or mailing under

separate cover. You can also leave blanks: “Thank you for your inquiry about \_\_\_\_.” Or design a form with every conceivable response and then check off the appropriate one (“Your order has been sent.” “We are temporarily out of stock.” “Please reorder in \_\_\_\_ days.” “This is a prepaid item, and your payment has not yet been received.” “Please indicate a second color choice.”).

- Reply to an e-mail message with an e-mail. When letterwriters give an e-mail address in their letters, you may respond that way if your response is brief or routine.

## WORDS

acknowledge	appreciate	confirm	enclosed
feedback	grateful	inform	notify
regarding	respond	return	send

## PHRASES

according to your letter	appreciate your business
appreciate your calling our attention to	as mentioned in your letter
delighted to receive	enclosed you will find
for further information	happy to hear from you
I’m sending you	in response to your letter of
meant a great deal to me	pleased to be able to send you
thank you for your letter telling us about	to let you know
under separate cover	want to reply to your letter
we appreciate your interest in	we have carefully/thoughtfully considered your letter
your sympathetic/delightful/helpful/comforting/encouraging letter/note	

## SENTENCES

As requested, we are submitting a budget figure for construction surveillance for the water and sewer line project.

Here is the information you requested about the tank closure.

I have received your apology, and hope you will not give the matter another thought.

I hope this information is useful to you in resolving any remaining title issues.

In response to your request for sealed bids, a bid from Dale Heating and Plumbing is enclosed.

Letters like yours have been a great comfort to us all.

Mary Postgate has asked me to respond to your letter about the settlement agreement dated January 30.

Thank you for sharing with me the lovely memories you have of Father.

Thank you for taking the time to write, and please excuse my delay in responding to your letter.

Thank you so much for your kind words/for your letter.

This is to let you know that the report you requested will be mailed as soon as it is completed (Dec. 3).

We are pleased to send you the enclosed information about Weycock United Sugar Company.

We thank you for your inquiry, and are pleased to enclose a sample snack bar.

You have asked me to estimate the fees that would be required for our services.

## PARAGRAPHS

Your book proposal has been read with great interest. We will want to have several other people read and evaluate it before submitting it for discussion at our weekly acquisition meeting. I will let you know as soon as we have made a decision.

Thank you for your inquiry about Gabbadeo Wines. Enclosed are several brochures describing our vineyards and products and a list of vendors in your area.

In response to your fax of June 3, I'm sending the three original contracts along with two copies of each, four pro forma invoices with two copies of each, and a bill of lading. Please let us know at once if everything is in order.

We received your impressive résumé today and look forward to meeting with you. Because of the large number of responses we received to our advertisement, however, it may be two or three weeks before you hear from us.

Thank you for your generous and sincere apology. I am entirely willing

to put the incident behind me, and I look forward to continuing our old association.

In response to your letter of September 16, we have made a number of inquiries and are pleased to tell you that most of the staff here is agreeable to helping you with your research project. Please telephone the department secretary Arthur Eden to let him know what day or days you would like to spend with us.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Ms. Stedman:

Thank you for your interest in our Quick Mail program. Due to an overwhelming demand, requests for our brochure and video cassette have far outpaced our supplies. However, a new shipment has been ordered, and we'll send you your materials as soon as we receive them.

Once you receive our kit, you'll learn all about the money-saving ideas that our program has to offer—reducing your mail float time, accelerating your cash flow, escalating your postage discounts, and still other techniques.

We'll look forward to hearing from you after you have had a chance to look over the materials.

Sincerely,

Dear Mr. Einhorn:

In response to your inquiry of December 3, I am sorry to tell you that Mr. Belton was with us for only a short time and our records do not indicate a forwarding address. I believe he used to also work for Lorraine Linens. You might try them.

Dear Barbara and Garnet,

Your love and support these past few weeks have been a great comfort to all of us. I am especially grateful for the way you took over with the children when I couldn't. And, Garnet, thank you for being a pallbearer. I know Edward would have wanted you there. I hope you have not exhausted your reserves of friendship, because I feel I am going to need your kindness and understanding for a while yet.

With love and gratitude,

Dear Louisa William,

I was delighted to receive and read your letter of August 3, 2005. Thank you for your kind remarks about the Alconleigh Suites and the excellent team that operates the hotel.

Louisa Kroesig, Sales and Catering Manager, is honored to receive this recognition for her staff. In addition, Christian Talbot, General

Manager, on behalf of the entire hotel team, is pleased with your compliments about our meeting and exceeding the expectations of the Jassy/Radlett wedding group.

Thank you for allowing us to be your hotel of choice—both for hotel accommodations and for your wedding reception—and for providing us with the privilege of introducing our brand of hospitality to your guests from across the United States.

We look forward to being of service in the future and feel privileged to have earned your continued business.

Thanks again for sharing your satisfaction with us.

See also: ACCEPTANCES, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, ADJUSTMENTS, APOLOGIES, COVER LETTERS, FAMILY, FOLLOW-UP, GOODWILL, REFUSALS, SENSITIVE, THANK YOU.

# Résumés

*We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing,  
while others judge us by what we have already done.*

—HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

A résumé gives prospective employers a written summary of your qualifications and work history. It convinces the reader that you're a good candidate for the position and that you should be invited for an interview.

Although it lacks most of the features of a sales letter (few employers are dazzled by extravagant claims and catchy language), the résumé is a letter in which you are both the seller and the product.

When applying for a job, you might use one or two of the following: *résumé*, a businesslike summary of your work history, education, and career goals; *cover letter*, a brief letter written to accompany a résumé; *letter of application*, a combination cover letter and brief, informal résumé. See COVER LETTERS and APPLICATIONS for assistance with the second two.

## Send a Résumé When

- applying for a franchise
- applying for a job or internship
- applying for membership in certain organizations
- applying to universities/degree programs
- inquiring about openings at a company
- responding to an employment ad

## How to Say It

- Place your name, address, and daytime telephone number (and possibly e-mail address, fax number, and website address) at the top right or at the top center of your résumé (the top left position may get stapled or punched).
- State the position or kind of job you're seeking.
- Detail your work experience and job skills. There are two basic approaches.

1. The traditional reverse chronological employment format starts by listing your most recent position and going back through time. This is the easiest format to use, but it has its weaknesses if there are gaps in your job history, if you're new to the job market, or if your previous jobs don't seem to relate well to the one you are seeking. The emphasis in this listing is on concrete information: dates of employment, name and full address of employer, job title, job duties, reason for leaving, if appropriate.

2. The non-chronological résumé (also called a skills-oriented or functional résumé) stresses your qualifications and abilities. You group job experiences according to a specific skill. For example, under "Leadership Skills" you write, "Supervised night shift at Hooper & Co. for two years." Under "Interpersonal Skills" write, "As the mayor's troubleshooter, I was often called upon to intervene in disputes, negotiate contracts, and otherwise deal with constituents, politicians, and city personnel under difficult circumstances." "Organizational Skills" might include: "I was hired at Arnold-Browne to reorganize the accounting department, which was barely functioning at the time due to staff turnover, low morale, lack of department guidelines, and poor use of office space. At the end of two years, I was commended by the company president for 'unparalleled organizing skills.'"

You can also combine the two approaches; under each job listed in reverse chronological order, group skills used in that position. Or, slant your résumé directly toward the job under consideration by listing the general qualifications and specific qualifications you have for it.

- Give the essential facts of your education: name of school, city and state where it is located, years you attended, the diploma or certificate you earned, the course of studies you pursued, special training, significant honors or memberships.
- List publications, if appropriate.

### **What Not to Say**

- Don't include a photograph or personal information (age or birth year, weight, height, marital or financial status, children, ethnicity, disability, religious or political affiliation) unless it is pertinent to the situation you are seeking. For example, to apply for a position as a weight control group leader, a mention of your weight history is probably indicated. It is often illegal for prospective employers to ask questions about age, sex, race, and religion.
- Don't tell what you expect the company to do for you. ("This position is a wonderful opportunity to learn about the marketing side of the

automotive industry.”) Emphasize instead what you can contribute to the company.

- Don’t present your accomplishments so that they say, “Here is what I’ve done.” Instead, phrase them to say, “Here is what I can do for you.” For example, “I have the experience and ability to help you increase production efficiency. While I was supervisor at Fortis & Co., department overruns decreased 32%.”
- Don’t tell every single thing you’ve done. Filler material detracts from a strong résumé. People who throw in all the extras on the theory that it “can’t hurt” may be wrong. Don’t include information on childhood, early schooling, hobbies, or interests (unless they relate directly to the position). Omit work you’ve done in the past that you don’t want to do again, unless this would leave unexplained holes in your résumé.
- Don’t embellish, exaggerate, tell half-truths, or, of course, lie. Many companies have résumé fact-checkers and if you’re found out, you will be dismissed, will suffer embarrassment and humiliation, and may be liable for civil charges. Trying to make yourself sound better than you are is often a tip-off that you may not be well qualified for that particular position—or happy in it.
- Don’t be too modest either by playing down your accomplishments. Have someone who knows you evaluate your final draft.
- Don’t use “etc.” It is uninformative and irritating and conveys excessive casualness.
- Don’t use weak adjectives and adverbs. Remove every “very” you find and such lukewarm words as “good,” “wonderful,” “exciting.” Use instead strong, perhaps even unusual, nouns and verbs. See lists of adjectives, nouns, and verbs in this chapter.
- Don’t use jargon, long, involved phrases, a bookish vocabulary you don’t normally use, or acronyms (unless the acronym is so familiar in your field that it would be insulting to spell it out).
- Don’t mention salary in a résumé; this is better discussed in an interview (and then try to get your interviewer to mention a figure before you do).

## Tips on Writing

- Before writing a résumé, assemble two kinds of information: facts about yourself and facts about your prospective employer and the position. Call the company to ask questions. Research the company at the library. Speak to people who work there or who know the company. When you tell a prospective employer what you can do for their company, the implication is that you’ve studied the company enough to know where you might fit in; this is appealing. Although you cannot change the facts of your employment history, you can



emphasize certain skills and qualifications if you know that this is what the employer wants. The employer may want creativity, for example, and none of your previous jobs emphasized it. Check other areas of your life to see where you have shown creativity—art classes, hobby photography, teaching pottery. When prospective employers see a résumé that has obviously been written especially for them, they give it more than the sixty seconds that most résumés get. By presenting as clear a picture of yourself as you can in terms of the employer's needs, you make it easy for them to determine quickly whether there is a match.

- Your résumé may be skimmed by a human resources assistant, scanned into a computer, or screened by a recruiter. It must appeal to all three: short paragraphs and white space and good headings to catch the eye of the assistant; plenty of appropriate keywords (see below) for the computer; a logical and persuasive organization of material for the recruiter.

- Large companies use Optical Character Readers (OCRs) to scan incoming résumés. Software identifies keywords and stores the résumés in a large database. When a new employee is needed, the database is searched by keywords to identify applicants who have the needed skills. Some career counselors recommended a special keyword section with a listing of terms that might get your résumé pulled. Others point out that the computer will find the terms whether they are in one paragraph or spread out through the résumé. What is critical is that your résumé contain the words most likely to identify you for the position you want. Tips for scanned résumés: put only your name on the first line as that's what the software is expecting; use jargon, acronyms, and other words commonly used in your field, along with their logical synonyms; identify abilities specifically, for example, name the computer software you're familiar with (don't simply list "word-processing skills"); use variations of words ("administrator," "administered") so that the program will pick up either; be specific ("advertising manager" instead of "manager" so that no matter which is searched for, it'll be caught; use only one date for your education (the date you received your degree) or the program will assume you simply spent time there; use both "R.N." and "Registered Nurse" in case only one has been requested; check the advertisement you're responding to and be certain the words used in it appear on your résumé.

- Your résumé is only as long as it needs to be. Most authorities recommend no more than one or two pages. In *The Smart Job Search*, Mark L. Makos says, "Unless it is not important to you to get a job, a one-page résumé is your only choice." However, for many academic and professional positions, you may need more than two pages—as many as twelve perhaps, if you have a long list of publications, patents, cases, conference presentations, or other itemizations. Whether one page or twelve, your résumé must be tightly written and readable:

use simple, short sentences, keep paragraphs short, and leave plenty of white space and ample margins. “Think of a résumé as a sixtysecond television commercial: that’s probably all the time the reader is going to spend on it.” (Lassor A. Blumenthal)

• Sample headings and divisions (you will generally have no more than five or six) that might be useful to you in constructing your résumé include:

Activities	Additional Accomplishments
Additional Experience	Awards, Honors, Offices
Background Summary	Career Highlights
Career Objective	Career Summary
Communication Skills	Copywriting Experience
Editorial Experience	Education
Employment Objective	Executive Profile
Experience	Extracurricular Activities
Highlighted Qualifications	Interpersonal Skills
Job Objective	Key Qualifications
Leadership Skills	Management Profile
Managerial Experience	Memberships
Negotiating Skills	New Product Development Skills
Office Management Skills	Office Skills
Organizational and Managerial Skills	Overview of Qualifications
Professional Achievements	Professional Affiliations
Professional Background	Professional Experience
Professional History	Professional Profile
Professional Qualifications	Promotional Skills
Related Experience	Relevant Accomplishments
Relevant Experience	Retail Sales Experience
Résumé	Skills
Skills Summary	Special Skills
Summary of Qualifications	Summary of Work History
Supervisory Skills	Systems Skills
Technical Experience	Training
Volunteer Work	Work Experience

• Concentrate on your strengths; you don’t have to include

everything you've ever done. For each characteristic that you think your employer might want (leadership ability, problem solving, initiative), assemble examples from your work history.

- There are three ways to refer to yourself in a résumé: (1) in the first person ("I managed the Midway Pro Bowl for three years, and saw it double in profits during that time"); (2) in the third person ("She has worked in a number of areas of radio broadcasting, including..." or "Dr. Patikar organized a new patient outcare service"); (3) without a pronoun ("Developed a new method of twinning steel"). Each style has advantages and disadvantages. The first can be wearying with all its "I"s (omit as many as possible), the second can appear remote and pretentious, and the third may seem abrupt. Use the style you feel most comfortable with, regardless of what you perceive as its benefits or disadvantages. In any case, do not refer to yourself as "the writer" ("The writer has six years' experience...").

- Use strong, active verbs. Instead of the weaker "I did this" or "I was responsible for that," write "I managed," "I developed," "I directed." See the list of active verbs in this chapter.

- Make all listings parallel in form: "I directed...I supervised...I increased..." Not: "I directed...I was a supervisor...I have increased."

- You will use two tenses in a résumé: the present tense for categories like career goal ("Desire position with...") and skills ("I am fluent in French, Italian, Spanish, and German"); the past tense for categories like work experience ("Headed all major advertising campaigns...") and professional accomplishments ("I won a six-state cabinetmaking competition").

- Use numbers to report successful outcomes of your work. Even if you were only partly responsible for increasing sales, decreasing expenditures, or coming in under budget for the first time in ten years, mention the figures. State how many people you supervised, how many copies of your books were sold, how many projects you oversaw, how much time or money you saved the company, the size of the budget you were responsible for, the percentage reduction in absenteeism in your department, the percentage increase in productivity at your station. Figures are persuasive.

- Resilience is an important qualification in a world where information and technology develop at high speeds. Emphasize your flexibility and ability to learn new tasks and adapt to new situations by making your past jobs sound different from each other. For example, if you've held several positions as an executive assistant, list under one position that you reorganized the filing system, under another that you trained employees in the use of the new telephone system, under yet another that you managed the office for three months while your supervisor was taking a leave of absence.

- Use only years, not months, when dating your work history.

- You need not mention the reason for leaving a position; if the

employer wants to know, this will be brought up in the interview. Readily accepted reasons include: moving, returning to school, seeking a better position, unforeseen changes in your former job.

- The old résumé standby, “References available upon request,” isn’t necessary since it is taken for granted that later in the process references will be requested by them and supplied by you. Include the line only if you need to fill white space at the end of your résumé. Always ask people in advance if you can use them as references.

- Don’t use the same boilerplate résumé for each job you apply for. Each résumé should be tailored to the particular company and typed or printed freshly (no photocopies).

- After you proofread your final draft, have at least two other people read it for you. The error that two of you miss will jump out at your prospective employer.

- Don’t staple, glue, or seal your résumé into a binder or folder (unless requested to). The pages should be loose and paperclipped together; they are easier to handle. Mail your résumé and cover letter in a 9” x 12” envelope so they arrive unfolded and crisp-looking.

- In some situations include work samples, publications, or other supplementary materials.

- Check your library or bookstore for books devoted solely to résumé writing. Two suggestions: David F. Noble, *Gallery of Best Résumés: A Collection of Quality Résumés by Professional Résumé Writers*; Wendy S. Enelow, *Résumé Winners From the Pros* (includes names and addresses of professional résumé writers).

## Special Situations

- If you prefer that your present employer doesn’t know you’re job-hunting, refer inquiries to your home phone or address and ask that references from your present employer wait until you and the prospective employer feel sure of the match.

- When given an application form to fill out for a job, you may attach a résumé to it.

- First-time job seekers encounter the classic frustration: They won’t hire me because I don’t have experience, and I don’t have experience because they won’t hire me. It is, however, possible to structure an appealing résumé without a significant work history. Summer jobs show dependability, initiative, responsibility. Extracurricular activities illustrate leadership potential, the ability to complete projects, and special interests. Awards, honors, GPA, elected offices, and scholarships indicate accomplishments and show that you have been singled out from your peers. Volunteer work, athletics, and organization memberships help define you and give you a profile. This type of résumé benefits from a skills orientation; you state that you are respons-

ible, dependable, hardworking, a quick learner, or loyal and give illustrative examples.

- When asked to furnish a brief biographical sketch (or bio) for program notes, a newspaper article, or a company newsletter, your résumé will help you write it. A bio is written in narrative fashion, is far briefer and less specific than a résumé, and aims to capture the essence rather than the details of who you are professionally.

- When applying for a franchise, follow FTC guidelines. You may want a lawyer to help with some of the correspondence.

- All résumés are typed, printed, or machine-produced on good bond paper (white or off-white), on one side only, in sharp black elite or pica type (no script or fancy font). They look professional, conservative, and straightforward. In a few fields, you might obtain a job using a highly creative résumé with graphics, colored inks, and an offbeat design. For this approach, however, you must understand your market—to the point perhaps of knowing someone at the company who obtained a job that way. This type of résumé receives admiring looks, but is often passed over for the more “stable”-looking résumé.

- When your résumé will be scanned: use only white paper; don’t use graphic elements, small type, or unusual fonts (Times Roman or Ariel are good choices); don’t use italics, underlining, or boldface; use asterisks instead of bullets as they are read as periods. OCRs like reading boring, homogeneous résumés; use this style only for them.

- Fax your résumé only if you have been asked to do so or someone needs it at once. Faxed résumés don’t look as good as those on résumé paper.

- Résumés may be e-mailed in certain situations: the classified ad gives an e-mail address and asks that résumés be sent there; you find the job opening on the company website and they encourage sending your résumé by e-mail. Check with them first about any special e-mail requirements.

## WORDS (ACTIVE VERBS)

accelerated	accentuated	accepted	accommodated
accomplished	accounted for	achieved	acquired
acted	adapted	added	addressed
adjusted	administered	adopted	advanced
advised	advocated	aided	allayed
alleviated	allocated	altered	amassed
amended	analyzed	anticipated	applied
appointed	appraised	approached	appropriated

approved	arbitrated	arranged	articulated	
assembled	assessed	assigned	assisted	
attained	attended	augmented	authored	
authorized	awarded	balanced	began	
bettered				
bid	blended	boosted		
bought	brought	budgeted	built	
calculated	captured	carried out	carved	
catalogued	c a t e g o r - i z e d	caused	celebrated	
centralized	chaired	challenged	c h a m - p i o n e d	
charged	charted	checked	chose	
clarified	classified	cleared	closed	
coached	collabor- a t e d	collected	combined	
c o m - m a n d e d	c o m m i s - s i o n e d	committed	communic- a t e d	
compared	compiled	completed	composed	
computed	conceived	conducted	confirmed	
connected	conserved	considered	consolid- a t e d	
construc- t e d	consulted	contacted	continued	
contracted	c o n t r i b - u t e d	controlled	converted	
cooperated	c o o r d i n - a t e d	corrected	correspon- d e d	
counseled	crafted	created	cultivated	
cut	dealt	decided	decreased	
defined	defrayed	delegated	delivered	
d e m o n - s t r a t e d	deployed	designated	designed	detailed
detected	d e t e r m - i n e d	developed	devised	
diagnosed	directed	disbursed	discovered	

dispatched	dispensed	displayed	disseminated
dissolved	distributed	diversified	divided
documented	doubled	downsized	drafted
drew up	drove	earned	economized
edited	educated	effected	elaborated
eliminated	emphasized	enabled	enacted
encouraged	enforced	engineered	enhanced
enlarged	enlisted	enriched	enrolled
ensured	entered	enticed	equipped
established	estimated	evaluated	examined
exceeded	exchanged	executed	exercised
exhibited	expanded	expedited	experienced
experimented	exported	extended	extracted
fabricated	facilitated		
factored	familiarized		
fashioned	fielded	filed	finalized
financed	finished	fixed	focused
followed	forecast	forged	formed
formulated	forwarded	fostered	fought
found	founded	funded	fulfilled
functioned as	furnished	furthered	gained
gathered	generated	governed	grew
grouped	guided	handled	headed
heightened	held	helped	hired
hosted	hurried	identified	illustrated
implemented	imported	improved	improvised
incorporated	increased	indexed	influenced
informed	infused	initiated	innovated
inserviced	inspected	inspired	installed

instilled	instituted	instructed	integrated
interacted	interpreted	intervened	interviewed
introduced	invented	inventoried	invested
investigated	invited	involved	isolated
issued	itemized	joined	judge
justified	launched	learned	lectured
led	lessened	leveraged	licensed
liquidated	litigated	located	logged
lowered	maintained	managed	mandated
maneuvered	manufactured	mapped	marked
marketed	masterminded	mastered	maximized
measured	mediated	mended	mentored
merged	met	met deadlines	minimized
mobilized	modeled	moderated	modernized
modified	molded	monitored	motivated
mounted	moved	multiplied	named
narrated	narrowed	navigated	negotiated
netted	nominated	notified	obtained
offered	officiated	opened	operated
optimized	orchestrated	ordered	organized
originated			
outdistanced	outlined	outsourced	
overcame	overhauled	oversaw	paced
packaged	packed	parlayed	participated
partnered	perfected	performed	persuaded
piloted	pinpointed	pioneered	placed
planned	positioned	predicted	prepared
prescribed	presented	preserved	presided
prevented	printed	prioritized	processed
procured	produced	profiled	programmed
progressed	projected	promoted	proofread
proposed	protected	proved	provided
publicized	published	purchased	quadrupled
qualified	quantified	quoted	raised



ran	ranked	rated	reached
read	realigned	realized	rearranged
rebuilt	received	recognized	recommended
reconciled	reconstructed	recorded	recovered
recruited	rectified	redesigned	redirected
reduced costs	reengineered	referred	regained
registered	regulated	rehabilitated	reimbursed
reinforced	rejuvenated	related	remained
remodeled	rendered	renegotiated	remewed
reorganized	repaired	replaced	replicated
reported	repositioned	represented	reproduced
researched	reshaped	resolved	responded
restored	restructured	retained	retooled
retrieved	returned	revamped	reversed
reviewed	revised	revitalized	revived
revolutionized	rotated	routed	safeguarded
salvaged	satisfied	saved	scanned
scheduled	screened	searched	secured
selected	sent	sequenced	served
serviced	set strategy	set up	settled
shaped	shepherded	shipped	shortened
showed	signed	simplified	sold
solicited	solidified	solved	sorted
sourced	spearheaded	specified	speeded
spent	spoke	sponsored	stabilized
standardized	started	steered	stimulated
streamlined	strengthened	structured	studied
submitted	succeeded	suggested	summarized
supervised	supplied	supported	surpassed
surveyed	systematized	synthesized	synchronized
tabulated	tackled	tallied	tapped
targeted	taught	tended	terminated
tested	topped	totaled	traced
tracked	trained	transacted	transcribed

transferred	transformed	transitioned	translated
traveled	trimmed	tripled	troubleshoot
turned around	tutored	typed	uncovered
underlined	undertook	underwrote	unified
united	unraveled	updated	upgraded
upheld	urged	used	validated
verified	viewed	volunteered	widened
withstood	won	worked	wrote

## WORDS (NOUNS)

ability	background	credentials
education	experience	goals
initiative	objectives	opportunity
references	skills	

## WORDS (ADJECTIVES)

adaptable	ambitious	assertive	capable
competent	conscientious	creative	decisive
dedicated	dependable	determined	discreet
dynamic	eager	effective	efficient
energetic	enterprising	enthusiastic	flexible
friendly	honest	imaginative	independent
industrious	innovative	intelligent	intuitive
loyal	mature	methodical	motivated
open-minded	optimistic	persistent	persuasive
pioneering	practical	problem-solver	productive
professional	progressive	qualified	reliable
resourceful	responsible	self-confident	steady
tactful	tenacious	trustworthy	versatile
well-organized			

## PHRASES

able to present facts clearly and succinctly	analytical and critical thinking skills
believe I could contribute/have a strong aptitude for	considered an enthusiastic worker
experience that qualifies me for	extensive experience with
good candidate/match for the job	good sense of/working knowledge of
in response to your advertisement	in this capacity
interested in pursuing a career with	may I have fifteen minutes of your time to discuss
my five years as	qualities that would be useful in
responsible for	serious interest in
sound understanding of	specialized in
supervisory abilities	take pride in my work
technical skills	well suited for
willing to travel	would enjoy attending/working/belonging

## SENTENCES

I achieved a 19% capture rate on grants proposals submitted to local funders.

I am a skilled operator of the bridgeport mill and radial drill.

I have three years' experience in product development.

I met every deadline while working at Brooker Associates, some of them under fairly difficult circumstances.

In my last position I performed complex CNC turning operations on diversified parts with minimum supervision, and also had Mazatrol experience.

In my two years at Arrow Appliance, I helped increase productivity by approximately 25% and decrease absenteeism by almost 20%.

I successfully reduced stock levels while maintaining shipping and order schedules, resulting in lower overhead costs.

I was responsible for all aspects of store management, including sales, personnel, inventory, profit and loss control, and overseeing the annual budget.

My work skills include data entry, alphabetical and numerical filing, photocopying, typing skills, good organizational skills, an affinity for detail, and previous experience in a legal office.

## PARAGRAPHS

Because my previous jobs have all involved public contact, I am comfortable dealing with people on many levels. As an academic adviser in the MBA program at McKeown College, I provided academic guidance and course selection assistance to adult graduate students and program applicants, recruited students, and promoted the program in talks and seminars.

I am highly skilled in the use and interpretation of specifications drawings and measuring instruments, generally knowledgeable about mechanical and electrical principles, and have experience in the construction, maintenance, and machine repair industries.

My responsibilities at Edwards International included invoicing, logging deposits, resolving billing problems related to data entry, managing four other accounts receivable employees, and filing a monthly report on the department.

I have analyzed malfunctioning machines and systems (electrical, hydraulic, pneumatic), recommended corrective action, and, upon approval, made repairs or modifications. I also have a working understanding of recovery equipment, instrumentation, systems, and facilities, know how to use complicated measuring and sampling equipment, and can repair machines and equipment, working from written or oral directions and specifications.

## SAMPLE RÉSUMÉS

*Present Address*

14 Grace Lane,  
#4 Route 9N  
Chance, UT 84623  
Fairfield, UT 84620  
801/555-2241  
801/555-2789

*Permanent Address*

## OBJECTIVE

An entry-level management position in transportation and logistics with the opportunity to contribute to the efficient operation of a firm and to earn advancement through on-the-job performance.

## EDUCATION

Bachelor of Business Administration, May 2002, from Merriam University, with a major in Transportation and Logistics and a minor in Psychology. Major G.P.A.: 4.0; cumulative G.P.A.: 3.4.

Coursework: Logistics Law, International Transportation and Logistics, Strategic Logistics Management, Transportation and Public Policy, Transportation Carrier Management, Transportation Economics; Accounting I and II, Business Communications, Business Law, Community and Regional Planning, Computer Science, Economics, Operations Management.

Financed 100% of college expenses through work, work-study programs, and grants.

## EXPERIENCE

Merriam University Computer Lab, 1999-2002; supervised three other students; oversaw hardware repairs and updating of software library; assisted users with various software (15 hours/week, September to May only).

Swinney's Book Store, summers, 1998-2000: assembled and packed book, magazine, and giftware shipments; trained twelve employees (20 hours/week).

Creston Food Stores, Inc.: Deli Manager and Clerk, summers, 1998-2000; controlled all facets of delicatessen, including catering large and small events; worked at five different stores (20 hours/week).

Lorimer Industries, Salt Lake City, June and July 2001, Transportation/Distribution Intern: facilitated the relationship between Transportation and Customer Support Inventory Planning and Purchasing; assisted in the routing and controlling of inbound raw materials; gained experience in outbound logistics management, including warehousing and distribution.

Blaydon Logistics Case Study, August 2001: one of seven students selected to participate in logistics project at Blaydon Corporate Headquarters, San Diego; evaluated performance measures used in the areas of transportation, customs, and export administration; presented initial findings and suggested alternative measures.

## STRENGTHS

*Communication:* communicate well when speaking and writing; able to act as liaison between different personality types; comfortable and effective communicating with both superiors and staff.

*Leadership:* able to motivate a project team; background in psychology provides wide range of interpersonal skills to encourage and instruct others.

*Responsibility:* accustomed to being in positions of responsibility; self-motivated and willing to set goals and work to achieve them; never assume "the other person" is responsible.

*Organization:* use time and resources effectively; consider efficiency, planning, and accountability very important.

*Computer expertise:* experienced in LilyPad 1-2-3, Savvy Pagemaker, WordAlmostPerfect 9.0, ELEMENTAL programming, Venus-Calc spreadsheets, Cambridge Graphics, MacroTough Advance, and Byte-wise.

*Other:* willing to relocate anywhere; have traveled to Europe (three times) and to the Orient (once) and thus have a global awareness of business and politics; quick learner and trained in analytical problem-solving skills; solid work ethic that finds satisfaction and pleasure in achieving work goals; daily reader of *Wall Street Journal*, *The Journal of Commerce*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and *The Utah Times*.

## ACTIVITIES

Treasurer, Transportation/Logistics Club

Member, University Finance Club

Campus Chest (student-operated community service organization), business manager, 1990, public relations, 1991

Member, Professional Women in Transportation, Utah Chapter.

Coordinator of the Business Council Peer Advisory to Transportation and Logistic Undergraduate Students

## AWARDS

Creston's Employee-to-Employee Courtesy Award

Dean's List, eight semesters

Golden Key National Honor Society

National Collegiate Business Merit Award

FROM: Pip Thompson

TO: Raindance Film Festival

DATE: 4-9-2001

RE: bio for film festival program

Pip Thompson graduated magna cum laude from Yale University with a BA in Anthropology and Theater Studies. Two years in the film industry as script supervisor, production coordinator, and short-film director were followed by graduate school; she will receive her MFA in film (directing) from Columbia University in 2001.

Although Thompson admits her areas of specialization may seem unrelated to each other and a strange base on which to build a film career, she feels that anthropology, literally “the study of people,” uncovers truths about human behavior while both theater and film convey those truths viscerally. Her viewfinder might not look like a microscope and her notebook contains storyboards, not observations on Inuit rituals, but she strives to direct films that give viewers insight into different cultures as a means of better understanding their own ways and the broader human experience.

A native of Minnesota, Thompson brought her interest in anthropology home with “The Windigo.” Set in the preserved wilderness of northern Minnesota, the story derives its title and subject from a local Ojibwe Indian myth and dramatizes the misunderstandings that can arise between cultures. Gerard strives to emulate native ways, but he embodies a recent trend that appropriates Indian legends and beliefs without truly understanding them. Sandy, on the other hand, learns the hard way that he is biased in favor of laboratory wisdom. “The Windigo” examines ancient myths through the eyes of contemporary culture in order to shed light on the past and the present.

Regina Alving  
1939 Norway Street  
Cleveland, OH 44101  
216/555-1234

## OBJECTIVE

To obtain a position as an administrative assistant commensurate with my experience, capabilities, and need to be challenged

## EDUCATION

2-year degree from Engstrand Technical College in office administration, 1999

## **WORK EXPERIENCE**

Manders Realty, assistant to the president, 1996-present  
Oswald Engineering Consultants, Inc., administrative assistant,  
1993-1996  
Ibsen Manufacturing International, assistant to the vice president,  
1989-1993

## **SKILLS**

All general office duties  
Typing 65 wpm  
Extensive experience with Microsoft Word, Access, Excel, Oracle Data Base,  
PowerPoint, Peachtree Accounting  
Good oral and written communication skills  
Fluent in written and spoken Spanish  
Personal characteristics include being highly organized, able to take a multi-  
task approach to the workday, self-motivated, tactful, discreet

See also: APPLICATIONS, APPOINTMENTS, COVER LETTERS, EM-  
PLOYMENT, FOLLOW-UP, REFERENCES, THANK YOU.



# Sales Letters

*The advertisement is one of the most interesting and difficult of modern literary forms.*

—ALDOUS HUXLEY

Almost every letter sent by a company, business, or organization is a sales letter. Even nonbusiness letters like sympathy notes, congratulations, thank-you letters, or apologies carry a second-level message that asks the recipient to think well of the firm. Courtesy, clarity, correctness, and persuasiveness are found in letters sent by successful companies.

Although computerized mailing lists have considerably reduced direct mail marketing costs, only about five out of every one hundred mailings are opened by the recipient. This has two implications: you use the envelope itself to entice the person to open it; you make those five opened letters so appealing that you obtain more than the average three out of five responses.

Sales letters aren't appropriate for all products and services, but they can get the reader to make the call or visit the store where the real selling can be done. Because they're effective and economical (compared to print and video advertising, for example), they're an integral part of most firms' marketing strategies. For many small businesses, they are the only affordable advertising tool.

Sales letters have become so sophisticated that many businesses no longer generate their own. The buzzword is "integration"—using full-service agencies to handle every aspect of advertising, including sales letters. Find such firms in the Yellow Pages under Direct Marketing, Advertising Agencies, or Public Relations Counselors.

## Kinds of Sales Letters

- announcements: changes/new products
- bull; asking for meeting/appointment (see APPOINTMENTS)
- bull; congratulations: purchase/new account/payment
- bull; direct mail advertising
- bull; follow-up: inquiries/sales letters/sales
- bull; form letters
- bull; goodwill (see GOODWILL)

- bull; introducing new products/services
- bull; invitation: open house/sale/membership/new account
- bull; questionnaires/surveys
- bull; responding to inquiries
- bull; special promotions/sales/gifts/free services
- bull; thank you: sale/new account/revived account
- bull; trial offers: products/programs/services/subscriptions

## How to Say It

- Get the reader's attention with your opening sentence, question, anecdote, or statistic.
- Create an interest in what you're selling with a strong central sales message.
- Arouse the reader's desire for your product by using specific, vivid words as well as active power verbs. One word that never gets old is "new."
- Point out how your service or product differs from similar ones, emphasizing quality and dependability.
- Convince the reader that responding to your offer is a smart move, and offer "proof" (samples, testimonials, statistics).
- Tell how to obtain your product or service.
- Give a reason for acting immediately: limited supply, expiring sale offer, future price increase, early-response discount.
- State clearly what immediate action you want them to take: "Telephone now for an appointment"; "Order one for every family member"; "Call today to arrange a demonstration"; "Return the postage-paid reply card now"; "Send for your free copy of the planning guide."
- Close the sales letter by inciting readers to immediate action and telling them what you want them to do (order, call, mail a card, come to the store). Give them a good reason for acting right now: limited supplies, expiration date of sale offer, prices going up later, early-response discount. Make it convenient to respond: order blanks with postage-paid reply envelopes, prepaid form postcards asking for a sales rep to call or for additional information, a toll-free number to call for local distributors or to place orders, order now-pay later procedures, listing of store hours and locations. (Business reply mail, with the seller paying the postage, has a 10 to 20 percent higher response rate than courtesy reply, where the buyer pays the postage.)
- Finally, echo your letter opening in some way. If you began by quoting a celebrity, finish by saying something like, "And that's why So-and-So won't drive anything but a..."
- Add a P.S. to repeat your main point, to emphasize an important feature, or to offer a new and strong sales point such as a money-

back guarantee, a time limit for the offer, an additional bonus for buying now: “P.S. To offer you these sale prices, we must receive your order by June 30”; “P.S. Don’t forget—your fee includes a gift!”; “P.S. If you are not completely satisfied, return your Roebel Pager and we will cheerfully issue you a full refund.” Lin Yutan wrote, “A letter is a soliloquy, but a letter with a postscript is a conversation.”

## What Not to Say

- Don’t make too many points in one letter. Concentrate on your strongest one or two sales points, add one in the postscript if you like, and save the others for follow-up letters.
- Don’t, in general, use numerous exclamation marks or exaggerated adjectives such as astonishing, revolutionary, incredible, sensational, extraordinary, spectacular. Describe instead concrete features, benefits, details, and product claims.
- Don’t ask questions relating to the sale (“Can you afford to throw this letter away?” “Can anyone today get along without one?”). It’s poor psychology to enlist readers in a dialogue in which they might not answer your question “correctly.” Questions derail your reader from the one-way train of thought that leads to a sale and bring to full consciousness the idea of refusal.
- Don’t say, “We never hold a sale! Our everyday prices are so low we don’t need to.” Human nature likes a sale. Even customers who regularly use your products or services and think they’re reasonably priced are attracted by a bargain. By offering occasional discounts, sales, clearances, and special purchase promotions, you’ll create a sense of excitement and willingness to buy in both old and new customers.
- Avoid jargon unless you’re sure that your target audience is familiar with it.
- Don’t threaten (“You’ll be sorry if you don’t order now”). It is off-putting and it tempts people to call your bluff. However, telling customers that their names will be removed from the mailing list if they don’t order soon is sometimes effective because people fear missing out on something.
- Don’t preach, scold, correct, or write down to customers (“you probably don’t know this, but...”). Have others read your letter to be sure no patronizing tone has crept in.
- Avoid the first-name, pseudo-friend approach. Business columnist Louis Rukeyser received an impressive reader response after a column on form sales letters. According to him, “The artificially intimate stuff appears particularly irritating.”
- Don’t make assumptions: that your reader knows what you are talking about, is familiar with an industry term, can picture your

product, agrees with your premises. Dale Carnegie wrote, “I deal with the obvious. I present, reiterate and glorify the obvious—because the obvious is what people need to be told.”

## Tips on Writing

- Whether you’re selling a product, service, idea, space, credit, or goodwill, the sales letter requires more work before you write than it does to actually write it. You need to know everything about your product or service. You need to know your reader, assembling as much data as possible. “Knowing something about your customer is just as important as knowing everything about your product.” (Harvey Mackay) Pinpoint and develop a strong central selling point. Consider other factors (timing, design, length, developing a coupon or sample). Only after adequate preparation is a successful letter written.

- Everyone agrees on the best way to begin a sales letter: with a bang! There’s no agreement, however, on the type of “bang.” Possibilities include: a surprising fact or statistic; a touching or dramatic anecdote; a personal story; significant savings; the offer of a gift, coupon, or booklet; a thought-provoking question or quotation; a joke or riddle; a celebrity endorsement, quote, or tie-in; a who-what-when-where-why paragraph; your strongest selling factor; a reference to something you have in common or to a previous contact or purchase; telling readers in a convincing way that they are special; asking or offering a favor; perhaps even a negative or unexpected statement.

- It’s hard to distinguish between the clever gimmick, hook, or attention-getter and the too-cute-for-its-own-good approach. When taking a risk with a novel overture, ask others to evaluate your letter. If it’s clever, the rewards are great. If you stray on the side of coy or insensitive, the results can be fatal.

- State the cost of your product or service. Customers ignore sales messages without prices, assuming they can’t afford the item. Cost determines most purchases, and if the customer has to call to find out what it is, the extra trouble is often not worth it when a competitor’s cost is available in its sales message.

- Although both are necessary, emotional appeals tend to outpull intellectual appeals. Tie your message to some basic human emotion: love (“your child will have hours of fun!”); the need for love (“heads will turn when you wear this”); prestige (“your home will be a stand-out with...”); ambition (“learn new management techniques overnight”); security (“smoke-alarm with built-in battery tester”). Show how your service or product will bring the customer better health, popularity, pride of ownership or accomplishment, success, more money, improved appearance, more comfort and leisure, social and business advancement, loyalty.

- From start to finish, the focus of a sales letter is on the prospective customer. Use the words “you” and “your” frequently, and describe the product in terms of benefits to the customers: how it relates to their needs, problems, and interests; how it can improve their lives, save them money, and make them feel more confident. The customer has only one question: “What will this do for me?” Persuade potential buyers that they need your product not so much because it’s a great product, but because it is great for *them*.

- Choose a consistent “voice” that complements your product or service and maintain it throughout your letter: friendly, neighbor-to-neighbor; serious and intellectual; humorous, lively, and fast-moving; brisk and businesslike; urgent and hard-hitting; sophisticated; soothing and reassuring; mysterious; technical or informational; emotional.

- Use colorful descriptive words, strong verbs, appealing images. Sometimes sales letterwriters are so intent on either educating the prospective customer or building up a case with statistics, background information, and reports that they forget how boring and how un-client-centered such a message is.

- Use repetition to emphasize a main point, clarify complicated material, and lend an attractive rhythm to your letter.

- Sales messages can mimic other familiar letters: letters of congratulations, thank-you letters, announcements, invitations, letters of welcome, holiday greetings.

- Create and foster credibility by means of testimonials, case histories, research studies, statistics, company reputation, product usage test results, comparison with similar products, free samples or trial periods, guaranties/warranties, celebrity endorsements, photographs of actual use, user polls. Whenever possible, guarantee the buyer’s satisfaction in some way.

- How long should a sales letter be? The key is that each word does its job, each word sells. A poorly written letter is in no way redeemed by being short, and some well-written long letters have enjoyed a high response rate. In general, however, shorter letters are better letters. Concentrate on what absolutely needs to be said—whether that takes one page, two, four, or ten. What needs to be kept short in any case are your paragraphs.

- To increase the desirability of responding, offer discounts, bargain prices, special offers, delayed no-interest payments, gifts, in-store certificates, enclosures, coupons, brochures, samples, or trial period.

- Attention-getting devices make your message more memorable: a message on the envelope that inspires the person to open it (studies show that mailers have about fifteen seconds to get customers to open the envelope or they lose them); handwriting part of the message (the P.S., for example); underlining certain words to look as though you personally emphasized the important points; yellow highlighting of key phrases; colored inks and papers; graphics; questionnaire or survey

format; boxed information; italics, capital letters, quotation marks, unusual type faces; design elements such as heads, subheads, white space, short paragraphs, indented material, and bulleted lists. Attention-getting devices are not always appropriate; to sell bank cards, life insurance, healthcare services, or other sedate products and services, you want a more traditional format.

- For more detailed advice on sales letters, see the excellent *Sales Letters That Sizzle: All the Hooks, Lines, and Sinkers You'll Ever Need to Close Sales*, 2nd ed., by Herschell Gordon Lewis (Chicago: NTC Business Books, 1999).

## Special Situations

- When responding to customer inquiries, the cover letter is a sales letter of the most potentially effective type because you've been given a focused opportunity to sell your product or service. Although the enclosure should sell itself (or the product it describes), the cover letter offers a strong sales message and additional incentives.

- A series of letters is often effective. When a segment of the market is susceptible to your product (because of previous purchases, for example), contact them several times—but with a different focus each time: a new premium, an additional benefit of your product or service, time growing short with the offer expiring soon, two-for-one price, discount. Or, target customers buying one of your products with a sales letter promoting another product or service that, out of long habit, they don't "see" anymore. For example, customers who regularly use a hair salon may forget that they can also buy an extensive line of hair-care products, use tanning booths, or schedule manicures.

- With a versatile product or service (or a number of different products in your line), you can reach different target audiences with letters tailored to their needs. A greenhouse manufacturer might write different sales letters to farmers, suburban homeowners, businesses, apartment dwellers, and even college students (the desktop miniature greenhouse).

- Sales letters aimed at former customers emphasize your appreciation for past business, your desire to serve them again, products or services introduced since your last contact with them, your confidence that you can satisfy their needs. You could ask if there is a reason that they no longer bring their business to you. This may provide you with useful information. Or it may remind the customer that there is no particular reason.

## Format

- Most sales letters are computer-generated—either standard form letters or letters in which names, addresses, and salutations are personalized using a mass mail merge feature. The latter gives form letters a more personal look (unless you are also inserting the person's name here and there throughout the letter, which actually gives the opposite impression).

- For highly select audiences, use good quality stationery, first-class postage, a real person's signature, and an individually typed address.

- E-mail sales messages are a growing phenomenon. Although it's unknown how consistently successful they are to date, they may be appropriate for your product or service. If this is a new area for you, work with one of the e-mail suppliers. Internet sales are definitely generating dollars, if not yet significant profits, but this sales approach resembles a catalog or television commercial, not a letter, and requires expertise of its own.

## WORDS

absolute	acquaint	adaptable	advanced
a d v a n t - ages	affordable	all-new	attractive
authentic	benefits	brand-new	b r e a k - through
choice	classic	clever	c o m f o r t - able
compact	confident	contempor- ary	convenient
dazzling	delightful	d e m o n - strated	d e p e n d - able
details	discovery	durable	economical
effective	exception- al	exciting	exclusive
expert	exquisite	extensive	facts
features	flair	flexible	genuine
guaranteed	half-price	handy	helpful
high-qual- ity	immediate	indulge	i n e x p e n s - ive
informat- ive	ingenious	innovative	instant

invaluable	investment	lasting	low-cost	
low-priced	luxurious	money-making	natural	new
nostalgic	offer	opportunity	optional	
personalization	pledge	portable	powerful	
practical	precision	premium	productive	
professional	profitable	proven	quality	
rapid-action	reasonable	rebate	refund	
reliable	results	revolutionary	reward	
safe	satisfaction	secure	solution	
sophisticated	spectacular	state-of-the-art	stunning	
substantial	successful	super	thrifty	
tremendous	trial	unbreakable	unconditional	
up-to-date	urgent	useful	user-friendly	
valuable	versatile	warranted	waterproof	
wholesale				

## PHRASES

add a new dimension to	advanced design
all for one low price	all-in-one convenience
as an added bonus	at a discount/a fraction of the cost/great savings/no expense to you
avoid worry/embarrassment/discomfort/risk	be more efficient
be the first to	both practical and beautiful/decorative
budget-pleasing prices	built-in features
business advancement	buy with confidence



can pay for itself in  
 choose from over 20  
 styles/cards/models/varieties  
 compact design  
 contemporary/gracious design  
 cutting edge  
 direct your attention to  
 dramatic difference  
  
 easier to use than ever before  
 easy-to-follow instructions  
 engineered for dependability  
 exclusive features  
 express your personality  
 finely crafted  
 fully automated/warranted  
 gives you your choice of  
  
 great gift idea  
 if not completely satisfied  
  
 impressive collection  
 increased enjoyment  
  
 indulge yourself  
 in these fast-moving times  
 invite you to  
 just a reminder that  
  
 key to your peace of mind  
 lets you enjoy more of your favorite  
 low, low prices  
 make it easy for yourself  
 many advantages of  
 more advanced features

carefree upkeep  
 come in and try  
  
 complimentary copy  
 customer support  
 direct-to-you low prices  
 discover for yourself  
 easier and more enjoyable/comfort-  
 able  
 easy/carefree maintenance  
 elegant styling  
 exciting details/offer  
 experience the pleasure of  
 fast, safe, easy-to-use  
 fit-any-budget price  
 get full details  
 greater safety/convenience/pleas-  
 ure/popularity  
 have the satisfaction of knowing  
 if you accept this invitation/respond  
 right away/send payment now  
 improved appearance  
 incredibly low introductory  
 rate/price of  
 influence others  
 intelligent way to  
 join millions of others who  
 just pennies each  
  
 lasting beauty  
 look forward to sending you  
 loyal customers like you  
 makes any day special  
 money's worth  
 more money/comfort/leisure

more than fifty years of service	most versatile, powerful, and exciting study aid available
no matter which set you choose	no more mess/lost sales/typing errors/fuss/worry
no-risk examination	no strings attached
now for the first time	of particular importance to you
one easy operation	one of the largest and most respected
one reason among many to order	one size fits all
order today	our top-seller
outstanding features	over 50,000 satisfied customers
perfect gift for yourself or a loved one	pleased to be able to offer you
preferred customer/rates	previously sold for
price you'll appreciate	pride of accomplishment
privileges include	professional quality
prompt, courteous service	proven reliability/technology
provides the finest home hair care at the least cost	ready to spoil you with its powerful features
reasonably priced	reduced price
revolutionary approach	reward yourself with
risk nothing	rugged and dependable
satisfaction guaranteed	save money/time
security in your later years	see for yourself
simple steps	so unusual and striking that
special benefits/introductory offer/value	state of the art
step in the right direction	stop those costly losses with
supply is limited	surprise your special someone with
take advantage of this opportunity	take a giant step forward towards
take a moment right now to look over this	takes the gamble out of choosing
time is growing short	timeless elegance
time-tested	top of the line
treat yourself to	unconditional money-back guarantee

<p>under no obligation to unequalled savings and convenience unique opportunity use it anywhere, anytime</p> <p>what better way to with no obligation on your part won't cost you a thing to world of enjoyment waiting for you you don't risk a penny you might expect these to cost as much as</p> <p>you will appreciate the outstanding quality of these</p>	<p>under our simple plan unique limited edition creations urge you to we're making this generous offer because</p> <p>whole family can enjoy with our compliments won't find better quality anywhere you can be proud of you'll be amazed to discover your money back</p>
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## SENTENCES

At this low price, every home should have one.  
Be the first in your community to have one!  
But act now—we expect a sizable response and we want to be certain that  
your order is processed.  
Call today to arrange a demonstration.  
Discover savings of up to 50%.  
Discover the elegance of a genuine leather briefcase with discreet gold ini-  
tials.  
Don't miss out!  
Do your holiday shopping the easy way.  
Enjoy it for a 15-day home trial.  
Every item is offered at a discount.  
If you are not completely satisfied, simply return it for a full credit.  
In order to make this offer, we must have your check by September 1.  
It's a first!  
It's a no-strings offer.  
Join us today.  
Just bring this letter with you when you come in to sign up.  
Just what makes the Blount Filing System so great?

May I make an appointment with you next week to explain/show/ demonstrate our latest line of products?

Now there's a new magazine just for you.

Order one for every family member.

Please don't delay your decision—we expect a heavy demand for the Ellesmere filet knife.

P.S. To lock in these great rates, we must receive your deposit by October 15.

Returning the postage-paid reply card does not obligate you in any way.

Send for your free copy of the Bemerton planning guide.

Send today for free, no-obligation information on rates and available discounts, special services, and easy claims filing.

Take a look at the enclosed brochure for a sneak preview.

Telephone Sarah Lash, your personal representative, for an appointment.

The Art Deco look fits almost any decorating scheme.

There is absolutely no risk on your part.

There's no cost or obligation, of course.

These low prices are effective only until June 1.

This is just one more reason why our products have won such overwhelming acceptance.

Use the order form and postpaid reply envelope enclosed to receive your first Holiday Bell absolutely free.

We cannot extend this unusual offer beyond May 25, 2004.

We invite you to complete the enclosed reservation request form and return it now to confirm your choice of dates.

We're making this unprecedented offer to a select group of business executives.

We take all the risks.

We've missed you!

You can choose from over 150 different programs.

You can now acquire a two-line telephone for far less than you ever thought possible.

You'll appreciate these fine features.

You'll like our convenient evening and weekend hours; you'll love our brand-new equipment and experienced teachers!

You'll see that Rockminster China isn't like other china.

You may not have ever bought/invested/tried, which is why we are making you this no-risk trial offer.

You must see the complete series for yourself to appreciate how it can enrich your life.

## PARAGRAPHS

If for any reason, at any time, you are not satisfied with your Haverley Air Cleaner, you can return it to us for a complete and prompt refund. No questions asked.

P.S. The cookbook of your choice and the lucite book stand are both yours free—without obligation. All you need to do is send in the enclosed form.

Send no money now. You will be billed at the time of shipment for any items ordered, plus shipping and sales tax (if applicable). You do not have to pay until you are totally convinced of the high quality and outstanding appeal of our lithographs and prints. If you are not delighted in every way, return your purchases within ten days, and you'll owe nothing!

There's one sure way to convince you that Bryerley Bath Beads are the last word in luxurious skin-softeners. We're enclosing sample packets of two of our most popular Bryerley scents, Gardenia and Lily of the Valley.

P.S. This is your last chance to buy the kits at these low prices. Rising material costs require a moderate price increase effective next month.

You want to give that special child in your life the finest reading—her or his very own books—but you don't have the time to look at thousands of children's books to find the best. That's where we come in.

Is a housecleaning service for you? We think so because you want the best for yourself and your family...and that takes time. Time you don't always have after working all week and meeting important family needs after hours. We can offer you thorough, reasonably priced, once-a-week housecleaning that will make a big difference in your life. Think about what you could do with the hours you now have to spend on housework. Think about walking into a clean house at night. And then think about giving us a call to schedule an estimate interview.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Executive:

According to several management studies, the single most important characteristic of an effective executive is the ability to manage time.

Are you meeting your deadlines? Can you list your current projects in order of importance? Do you know where you're headed over the next week, month, year? Can you find things when you need them? Do you assign work in the most time-effective ways?

If you answered no to any of these questions, you're sure to benefit from our popular, effective Time Management Workshop.

In just two days you learn how to set priorities, how to use special tools to help you organize your time, and how to develop interpersonal skills to help you deal with unnecessary interruptions, inefficient staff, and group projects.

In fact, we don't want to be one of those interruptions, so we'll make this short. We simply suggest that you save time by making time for the next Time Management Workshop in your area. You can do this in under a minute by checking off a convenient date and signing the enclosed postage-paid reply card or by calling 800/555-1707 to register.

This is one workshop that won't be a waste of time!

Sincerely,

Dear Marietta Lyddon,

You were a member of the Atlas Fitness Club from March 15, 1996, to November 18, 2002, and according to our records you worked out regularly.

Whatever your reasons for not being with us the past several years, you may want to know about some changes that have taken place since you were last here:

*New this year:* Olympic-size pool with extended hours, 5:30 a.m. to midnight. A lifeguard is on duty at all times.

*New this year:* Membership packages designed to fit your use patterns. You may now choose between an all-use pass or a pass that specifies morning hours, early morning hours, after-five hours, evening hours, late evening hours.

*New this year:* Peripheral services that our members—most of whom are busy working people like yourself—have requested: a personal check-cashing service; yogurt, soup, and mineral water machines in the lobby; a telephone for the use of members making local calls; all-new padlocks for the lockers.

*New last year:* We have 50% more equipment in the weight lifting room, and three new Nautilus units.

If you liked us before, you'll love us now. I think it's worth a look, and I'm so convinced of this that I'm offering you a two-week membership for FREE.

Just bring this letter with you when you come to give us another look!

Sincerely yours,

See also: ANNOUNCEMENTS, APPRECIATION, CONGRATULATIONS, COVER LETTERS, CREDIT, FOLLOW-UP, GOODWILL, HOLIDAYS, INVITATIONS, ORDERS, REQUESTS, THANK YOU.

# Sensitive Letters

*When it comes to bombshells, there are few that can be more effective than that small, flat, frail thing, a letter.*

—MARGARET DELAND

In some difficult situations, writing a letter is more effective than a face-to-face encounter. “Most people think better on their seat than on their feet.” (Dianna Booher) When writing a letter, you have time to reflect on what has happened, to inform yourself of related or supporting facts, to choose your words so that they convey exactly what you want to convey, and to rewrite the letter as many times as you need to until it accurately presents your position.

## Letters Require Sensitive Handling When You Must

- ask someone to return an engagement ring
- borrow money from a friend or family member
- break off a relationship
- claim credit for your work
- clear yourself of an unjust accusation
- deliver bad news
- inquire about a gift or check that hasn't been acknowledged
- offer unsolicited and probably unwelcome advice
- remind someone of an unpaid personal loan
- report a child's unpleasant behavior
- report sexual harassment
- reprimand an employee (see also EMPLOYMENT)
- respond to someone with a terminal illness (see “GET WELL”)
- tell the other person they're wrong
- turn someone down for a job whom you know well
- uninvite guests

## How to Say It

- Write promptly. Nothing will make a difficult letter more difficult to write than putting it off.

- Begin with a courteous expression about something, however small, that you can agree upon or that you have in common.
- Admit (if it's true) that you're uncomfortable with the situation.
- State the issue clearly and directly. Dressing up your message in big words, roundabout phrases, and conciliatory sentences only antagonizes the other person. If you have trouble writing this part of the letter, say your message aloud as though speaking to a friend. Boil down your "conversation" to a sentence or two that expresses the heart of the matter.
- Provide facts and details of the issue.
- Convey your understanding of the other person's position.
- Admit your role in the situation, if you have one. When you take responsibility for your contribution, others are more likely to own up to theirs.
- Examine your position for areas of negotiation. Can you trade one point for another? Can you accept anything less than what you originally wanted?
- State what you are asking or what solution you want.
- Close with a wish to put the matter behind you, with an expression of confidence that the situation will be resolved, with a statement that a satisfactory solution will benefit both of you, or with a sentence conveying your goodwill.

### What Not to Say

- Don't tell people what to do (this sentence doesn't count). Words like "must," "ought," and "should" raise most people's hackles. Replace them with "might like to," "could consider," or other more open-ended phrases.
- Don't write unpleasanties. They live forever and you will not forget—or be allowed to forget—them.
- Don't use words that trigger negative reactions in the reader. Although almost any words, when strung together in the right order, could annoy a person, some are immediately inflammatory: "obviously" and "clearly" (of course it isn't obvious or clear, or the other person would have known it—are you saying they're stupid?); "you appear to think," "according to you," "you claim," and "if you are to be believed" (these belittle the other person's word); "you must agree" or "at least you will admit" (not so—these phrases make the person want to not agree and not admit).
- Don't use words like "problem," "argument," "battle," "disagreement" or those labeling a situation negative or adversarial.
- Don't exaggerate or dramatize: "You egregiously underestimated"; "In all my years as a coach I've never seen anything as reprehensible"; "I will never be able to forget what you did"; "You have contributed



absolutely nothing to the department." When the words "never" and "always" appear, you are probably exaggerating or dramatizing. "Magnifying a matter is not the way to mend it." (Ivy Compton-Burnett)

- Don't be too "sensitive" when writing a letter about a sensitive issue: "I hesitated a long time before writing this..."; "I hate to write because I know how upset you get"; "Now don't be mad, but..."; "Promise me you won't take this the wrong way..." State calmly and neutrally what the issues are; leave the emotions (theirs and yours) out of it.
- Concentrate on facts instead of feelings. "I don't feel this is fair" does not carry as much weight as, "The guidelines for the competition stated clearly that..."
- Don't assume you have all the facts. Check your assumptions. Particularly when a number of people are involved, an issue can become muddled.
- Don't make a decision sound negotiable if it is not. It is kinder to be clear that the answer is no, the news is bad, the response is negative.
- Don't deal with other matters in a letter about a touchy situation; save them for later. Sometimes people try to hide the difficult part of the letter in a jumble of news, offhand remarks, or other distractions. It doesn't work.
- Don't try to teach people a lesson, lecture them, or label their behavior if you want to achieve a specific goal (the return of a tool, repayment of a debt, stopping a behavior, undoing a wrong). If you want to vent and don't care if you ever see the person again, it doesn't matter what you say.
- Don't put people on the defensive by attacking them or disparaging their personality, character, intelligence, or looks. People who have been made to feel stupid and little are not apt to give you what you want. Focus on the behavior, the facts, the central issue. Getting personal indicates a weak position and "anger is not an argument." (Daniel Webster)
- Don't threaten (lawsuit, loss of your friendship, some action). It won't solve the problem and it weakens your side of the issue. "Never give anyone an ultimatum unless you are prepared to lose." (Abigail Van Buren)

## Tips on Writing

- Think twice before offering unsolicited advice or "help." "It's awfully important to know what is and what is not your business." (Gertrude Stein)
- Before writing the letter, finish this sentence: "I want them to..." Do you want a rebate, an exchange, repairs? Do you want an apology, a corrected statement, a credit? Do you want something redone? Do

you want to convince the person that facts, statistics, opinions are wrong? Be clear about your goal.

- Link some good news to the bad news. This shouldn't be artificial or inappropriate good news, but any upbeat items help put the unpleasant part of the letter in a more hopeful context.

- When possible, help the other person save face. Set up the situation so that the person can do what you want and at the same time feel generous, gracious, powerful, and willing.

- We usually prefer active voice to passive voice. However, the passive voice is more tactful in a touchy situation. Instead of writing, "You did this," write, "This was done."

- You can say you are angry, disappointed, upset, distressed, appalled, or anything else you might feel. In fact, the more carefully you choose the words that describe your position, the clearer the communication will be. What is unacceptable is abusing the other person verbally. The difference often lies between "I" statements and "you" statements: "I am upset about the dent in my car door" is appropriate; "You are an idiot and they should take away your license" is not—unless, of course, you don't care if the person pays for the dent or if you ever see them again. Strive for a letter that is factual, dispassionate, considerate, and even-handed. When you write a letter in the midst of your anger, don't mail it; reread and rewrite your letter several times over a period of days.

- When writing a letter about a sensitive subject, ask someone you trust to read your letter before you send it.

## Special Situations

- A profoundly bitter, prejudiced, hostile, accusatory, or hate-mongering letter requires careful handling. If you think the writer could be dangerous, consult with police or an attorney. In any case, you need never respond to an abusive letter. At the mild end of the spectrum, when the person simply seems to be letting off steam (and you think a response is called for), reply with "I am sorry to hear you feel that way."

- When writing to borrow money from a friend or relative, remain businesslike about how much you need, why you need it, and when you will repay it. Offer to sign an agreement. Reassure the person that you will understand if they have to refuse you.

- Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome, unsolicited, nonreciprocated sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, sexually motivated physical contact, or communication of a sexual nature, usually by someone who has power over another person. It includes comments, jokes, looks, innuendoes, and physical contact, and emphasizes a person's sex role over any function as a worker. It is against the law.

If you are on the receiving end of such behavior, a good first step is a letter notifying the person that you consider the conduct sexual harassment. It used to be that saying anything about another's offensive behavior not only got you nowhere, but got you in trouble. This is no longer quite as true. Depending on your situation, a quiet warning note might be all that's needed. If you are the offender and have been called on it, (1) educate yourself about the issues until you feel sure you know where the boundaries are; (2) write a brief note of apology, thanking the person for letting you know and stating that you will comply with the request; (3) never repeat the behavior. Few reasonable people will bring a charge of sexual harassment against a one-time offender who didn't realize the original harm done and who is now apologetic and reformed.

- In the case of a serious disagreement, begin by referring to the previous correspondence or to the event responsible for the present letter. Outline the two opposing views or actions. Give clear (perhaps numbered) reasons for your stand, using statistics, quotations from an employee handbook, supportive anecdotal material, and names of witnesses or others who agree with you (with their permission). If appropriate, suggest an intermediate stage of negotiation: a reply to specific questions in your letter; further research; a meeting between the two of you or with third parties present; visits to a lawyer, accountant, or other appropriate adviser. If the disagreement has reached the stage where you can effectively do this, finish by stating clearly the outcome you desire. End with your best wishes for a solution acceptable to both of you and a reference to good future relations.

- When requesting a favor that makes you uncomfortable, admit it. You will make the request more easily if you can accept "no" for an answer, and if you make this clear to the other person.

- When reprimanding an employee, begin with a positive or complimentary remark. Describe the employee behavior and tell why it is unacceptable. Mention how it came to your attention. Suggest how the employee can improve or change. Outline any previous history of the same behavior (documenting this with dated reprimands). State the consequences of continuing the behavior. Tell exactly what you expect the employee to do (apologize, take a class, speak to you, not repeat the behavior). Say that this letter will be placed in their file. Close with an expression of confidence that the situation will be successfully dealt with. You may want the employee to sign and date the letter to verify having read it. A reprimand is brief, respectful, encouraging, and positive (instead of writing, "Don't send out any letters with misspellings," write, "Please use your spellcheck function followed by a dictionary check of any questionable words").

## Format

- Sensitive business matters are typed on letterhead stationery to convey formality and a certain neutrality. This will have a “cool” tone. When a business matter has personal aspects, handwrite it. This letter will have a “warm” tone.
- A sensitive personal matter is dealt with in a letter written by hand or typed on personal stationery.
- E-mail and fax are inappropriate for sensitive issues.

## WORDS

ambiguous	annoyance	arrange	bothersome
burdensome	circumstances	complex	difficult
dilemma	discuss	disinclined	distressing
disturbing	embarrassment	extent	hardship
impede	inconvenient	inopportune	intervene
involved	mediate	negotiate	object
oppose	predicament	problem	protest
puzzling	refusal 11	regrettable	reluctant
thorny	troublesome	troubling	unfavorable
unfortunate	unhappy	unpromising	unsuccessful
untimely	unwilling	upsetting	worrying

## PHRASES

agree to disagree	apologize for my part
appreciate your willingness to	come to terms
deal with	difficult to understand
find a middle ground	give and take
happy to sit down and discuss	in the future
look forward to	pleased to be able to discuss
rough going	state of affairs
ticklish situation	with your help
work for a happy ending	work out a solution
would like to hear your side	

## SENTENCES

Do you have time to discuss this over a cup of coffee?

I feel sure you will make the best decision for all involved.

I hope you will understand that while I am in the early stages of recovery I simply can't be around some of my old friends—wish me well and I will call you when I can.

I understand you have some thoughts about my work, behavior, and looks, and I would like to discuss these with you directly instead of hearing them second-hand.

The language and tone of your last letter is unacceptable to us. Please forward our file to someone else in your organization who can handle this matter.

You don't have to understand where I'm coming from or agree with me or even like what I'm saying, but would you—as my good, dear friend—do me the great favor of not using crude language around me?

## PARAGRAPHS

I'm sorry to have to write again about the \$500 you owe me. I helped you with the clear understanding that the money would be repaid within two months. I've given you at least a month's grace, but I must insist on receiving the money before the end of the week.

I was surprised to learn last week from Miles MacPhadraig that you and he had been discussing your new alarm system. I suspect I misunderstood him because it sounded like the system I've been working on. You might be interested in seeing my record of invention (enclosed). I'd be happy to show you what I'm doing if you stop by the lab sometime.

Alert! Alert! Jay, I need my kayak. Now! Every time I've called I was sure we understood each other. Maybe a note will do the trick. Just keep saying to yourself: Kayak. Back. To Jack.

I'd like to set the record straight: it was not I who called you an ugly name. I don't know who it was. The person who ascribed it to me was mistaken. In any case, that's not my style—and I think you know that.

As you know, the Financial Commission has been very pleased with your work. Unfortunately, there is not quite enough of it. Your coffee breaks and lunch hours have been growing increasingly lengthy over the past few months. I realize it's tempting to slip out to run an errand or two or to go to the gym for a workout, but the company has a zero tolerance policy for short workdays. Please let us have a full measure of your fine work.

As you can imagine, I wish I had any other response to give you. I would have enjoyed working with you. The decision has been made, however, to hire someone with more experience in livestock production.

Christy and Ben tell me that Jimmy and Letty have been teasing them unmercifully about having two mothers instead of a mother and father. Some of the remarks sound oddly adult—not the sort of thing that preschoolers would come up with on their own. I know you have not been particularly happy to have us in the neighborhood, but we’re sad to see the children involved this way. We’d like to invite the two of you and Jimmy and Letty for a couscous dinner one night next week. Perhaps we can find enough common ground to allow us to live in a neighborly way.

About your visit this weekend—Biddy is quite upset at the thought of having Pip in the house again. She isn’t frightened of all dogs but Pip feels unpredictable to her. At any rate, we’ve made reservations for you at the Gargery Motel nearby. They welcome pets. Let us know if this is all right with you.

You’re my brother and I love you, but please don’t come to the house again when you’ve been drinking. It disturbs the children, and because they look up to you it sets an unfortunate example. You’ll be welcome any other time. When you’ve been drinking, I will not be able to invite you in.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Mrs. Tilford,

We all enjoyed Mary’s stay with us last weekend. Because it was so pleasant, I’m sorry to be writing with this problem.

When I was a child, my father brought me back a small carved giraffe from Africa. As he died soon afterwards, I have always treasured this memento. I missed it Sunday evening and spent several days looking for it. Karen told me that Mary now carries it around in her schoolbag and freely admits to “finding” it here. In her six-year-old way, Karen demanded it back, but Mary was evidently not ready to let it go. I trust that you will find some good way of convincing Mary to return it.

Thank you for taking care of this.

Sincerely,

My dear Annie-Laurie,

I’ve lost the rhinestone necklace you lent me for the dinner dance last week. I am devastated. I’ve looked everywhere for it. I’ve called the hotel, the taxi company, everyone who was at the dance. Nothing. I’m not giving up (I’m putting an ad in the paper this week), but the situation is looking hopeless and I need to let you know what is going on.

I will of course replace it, but since it was your mother’s, there’s no way to make up for its sentimental value. I’ll call you tomorrow to see

what's the best way of going about this. My deepest apologies for an unforgivable loss.

My dear Bryn,

I've been doing a lot of thinking lately. I know you noticed because you've asked me several times what's wrong. What's wrong is that I've realized I don't have the kind of feelings for you that I want to have if we are to spend the rest of our lives together.

I think the world of you—and you know that's true—but I'm convinced my love for you is not a marrying kind of love. It's a friendship kind of love.

I waited to write this letter until I was very, very sure of my thoughts and feelings. You've done nothing wrong and there is nothing you can do to spark something that isn't there. I don't want to leave you with any doubts or hopes about what I'm saying.

I'm probably the last person who can be of support to you, but if there's anything I can do to make this easier, let me know. In the meantime, know that you are and will always be one of the dearest people in my life.

TO: Gus Parkington  
FROM: Alice Sanderson  
DATE: Nov. 13, 2002  
RE: Request

I need to tell you that repeatedly touching my arm or putting your arm around my shoulder is inappropriate in a business setting (it would actually also be inappropriate outside the business setting because I don't welcome such gestures from people I don't know well). In the office, this is considered sexual harassment. I would appreciate keeping our exchanges on a professional level. Knowing how intelligent and quick-on-the-uptake you are, I feel sure we need never discuss this again.

Dear Lizzie and Jim,

We are still talking about your beautiful wedding! I meant to ask you if the singer was a friend of yours—his voice was stunning.

I'm wondering if you received my wedding gift. As it was rather fragile, I hesitate to pay my Cecil-Roberts charge balance until I am sure that (a) you did indeed receive it and (b) it arrived in one piece. I have visions of it having arrived damaged and you not knowing quite what to do about it.

Give my love to your mother when you see her, will you, Lizzie?

Fondly,

Bert

Dear Hamilton,

We are fortunate that in such a large, high-pressure office we all get along so well. You are one of the ones who keep the social temperature at such a comfortable setting. I don't know anyone in the office who is better liked than you.

You can perhaps help with this. The collection of contributions towards gifts for employees' personal-life events is becoming a little troubling. Certainly, the communal sending of a gift is justified now and then. In the past month, however, there have been collections for two baby shower gifts, one wedding shower gift, two wedding gifts, one funeral remembrance, four birthday gifts, and three graduation gifts.

It's not only the collected-from who are growing uncomfortable (and poor), but the collected-for feel uneasy receiving gifts from people who don't know them outside the office, who wouldn't even recognize their graduating children, their marrying daughters and sons, or their deceased relatives.

This is essentially a kind gesture (and one that people think well of you for), but the practice seems to have become too wide-ranging and feels inappropriate in today's office setting.

Thank you for understanding.

See also: ADJUSTMENTS, BELATED, COMPLAINTS, DISAGREEMENT, REFUSALS, SYMPATHY.



# Letters of Sympathy

*A good letter of condolence is like a handclasp, warm and friendly.*

—LILLIAN EICHLER WATSON

Letters of condolence and sympathy are some of the most difficult to write. People who are shocked and saddened and who feel inadequate and tongue-tied are writing to people who are grief-stricken and vulnerable and who feel life is hardly worth living.

However painful they are to write, letters of sympathy are imperative if you have a personal or business relationship with the deceased's family or friends. It will not be easy for them to overlook your ignoring something as all-important as the death of a loved one.

Condolences are offered only in the event of a death; sympathy may be expressed for a death, but it is also extended to those who have suffered from a fire, flood, storm, or natural disaster; burglary, theft, or violent crime; a lost job, bankruptcy, personal reverses, or other misfortunes.

## Send Letters of Sympathy in Cases of

- absence of a superior who would normally respond
- anniversary of a death (see also ANNIVERSARIES)
- death of a family member of friend/neighbor/relative/customer/client/employee/colleague
- death of an employee (write to next of kin)
- death of a pet
- divorce
- hospitalization due to serious illness or accident (see also "GET WELL")
- miscarriage or stillbirth
- misfortune: loss of job/bankruptcy/burglary/violent crime
- natural disaster: flood/hurricane/drought/storms
- terminal illness (see also "GET WELL")

## How to Say It

- Simply and directly express your sorrow about the other person's loss or trouble.
- Mention by name the person who died or the unfortunate event.
- Tell how you heard the news, if appropriate.
- Express your feelings of grief, dismay, loss.
- Offer sympathy, thoughts, prayers, good wishes.
- In the case of a death, mention what you liked or loved about the deceased; relate some happy memory, anecdote, favorite expression, or advice they gave you; mention the virtues, achievements, or successes for which they'll be remembered; tell about something they said or did that touched you. Especially welcome is recalling a complimentary or loving remark made by the deceased about the bereaved person. The more specific you are, the more memorable and comforting your letter will be.
- Close with a general expression of concern or affection or an encouraging reference to the future: "You are in my thoughts and prayers"; "My thoughts are with all of you in this time of sorrow"; "In the days ahead, may you find some small comfort in your many happy memories."

## What Not to Say

- Don't say too little (sending only a commercial card with your signature) and don't say too much (offering clichés, advice, or inappropriate comments).
- Don't use overly dramatic language ("the worst tragedy I ever heard of," "the dreadful, horrible, appalling news"). If you were shocked or appalled at the news, say so—but avoid being excessively sentimental, sensational, or morbid. A simple "I'm sorry" is effective and comforting.
- Don't discuss the philosophy of death and disaster or offer religious commentary unless you are certain that sympathy grounded in a shared philosophic or religious orientation is appropriate with this person. Avoid pious clichés, simplistic explanations of the tragedy, or unwarranted readings of God's activities, intents, or involvement.
- Don't give advice or encourage big changes (leaving town, moving into an apartment, selling the spouse's model ship collection). It's usually many months before survivors can make well-thought-out decisions.
- Don't make generic offers of help like "Let me know if I can help," or "Feel free to call on us." This requires a response from people who already have much to deal with; most people will not take you up on such vague invitations. Instead, just do something: bring food,

have the dress or suit the person is wearing to the funeral drycleaned, put up out-of-town relatives, watch children for several hours, address acknowledgments, take over work duties for a few days, cut grass or shovel snow or water the garden, help clean the house. If you're not close to the bereaved, an offer of help will be seen for the empty gesture it is. If you are close, you will either know what is helpful or you know whom to ask (friend, neighbor) about what needs doing.

- Don't focus on your feelings: "I've been just devastated—I can't seem to keep my mind on anything"; "I start crying every time I think of him"; "Why didn't you call me?" In the chapter entitled, "P.S. Don't tell *me* how bad you feel!" of her best-selling book, *Widow*, Lynn Caine says most of the condolence letters she received were more about the writer's awkwardness, discomfort, and inadequacies than about her sorrow or their shared loss. She says many letters were "full of expressions of how uneasy the writers felt, how miserable the writers were—as if they expected *me* to comfort *them*." There is a fine line between expressing your sorrow and dramatizing your own reactions.
- Don't offer false cheeriness or optimistic platitudes. In a *Reader's Digest* article, "An Etiquette for Grief," Crystal Gromer says, "In the context of grief, clichés are simply bad manners... 'At least he didn't suffer,' people say. 'At least he's not a vegetable.' Any time you hear 'at least' come out of your mouth, stop. Creating an imaginary worse scenario doesn't make the real and current one better. It trivializes it." C.C. Colton once said, "Most of our misfortunes are more supportable than the comments of our friends upon them." Avoid the following comments:

Chin up.	Be brave.
Don't cry.	You'll get over it.
It's better this way.	She is better off now.
Time heals all wounds.	He was too young to die.
Life is for the living.	Keep busy, you'll forget.
I know just how you feel.	God never makes a mistake.
Be happy for what you had.	He's in a better place now.
It's a blessing in disguise.	At least she isn't suffering.
You must get on with your life.	He was old and had a good life.
Every cloud has a silver lining.	I heard you're not taking it well.
She is out of her misery at least.	Be thankful you have another child.
At least you had him for eighteen years.	Don't worry, it was probably for the best.

I feel almost worse than you do about this.

You're young yet; you can always marry again.

You're not the first person this has happened to.

God only sends burdens to those who can handle them.

God had a purpose in sending you this burden.

It's just as well you never got to know the baby.

I have a friend who's going through the same thing.

Life must go on—you'll feel better before you know it.

## Tips on Writing

- When your condolences are belated, send them anyway. A person can overlook tardiness, but it's almost impossible to overlook being ignored at a time like this.

- In most cases, be brief. A lengthy letter may be overwhelming in a time of grief. On the other hand, if your letter is lengthy because you are recounting wonderful memories of the deceased person, it will be comforting and welcome. A letter that is lengthy because it includes other news or because it dwells on your own feelings is not appropriate.

- Be tactful, but don't fear being honest—using the word *death* or *suicide*, for example. Circumlocutions like *passed on*, *passed away*, *departed*, *left this life*, *gone to their reward*, *gone to a better life*, *the deceased*, and *the dear departed* are no longer seen very often.

- Accept that nothing you write will take away the person's grief, grief that is a necessary part of the healing process. Too many people agonize about finding the words that will make everything right again. There simply aren't any.

- Observe the fine line between sympathy and pity. Sympathy respects the person's ability to survive the unfortunate event; pity suspects it has beaten them.

- Let the person know you don't expect a response to your note or letter. After writing thank-you notes for flowers, condolences, memorials, honorary pallbearers, and special assistance, there is often little energy left to acknowledge sympathy letters.

- If you're writing to one member of the family, mention the others in your closing.

- To ensure that you don't write anything awkward, pitying, or tactless, reread your letter as though you were the one receiving it.

- For additional advice, see Leonard M. Zunin and Hilary Stanton Zunin, *The Art of Condolence: What to Write, What to Say, What to Do at a Time of Loss* (1991). For more general background reading, see Judith Viorst, *Necessary Losses* (1986).

## Special Situations

- Miscarriages and stillbirths are devastating. Sympathize as you would for the death of any child. Avoid such unfortunately common remarks as: “You already have two lovely children—be grateful for what you have”; “This may have been for the best—there might have been something wrong with the baby, and this was nature’s way of taking care of it”; “You’re young yet—you can try again.” And the worst of all: “Don’t feel so bad. After all, it isn’t as though you lost a child.” The person *has* lost a child.

- In the case of a suicide, offer sympathy as you would to any bereaved family. Because many survivors experience feelings of guilt, rejection, confusion, and social stigma, they need to know that you’re thinking of them. Although it is generally appropriate to say you were “shocked to hear about” someone’s death, avoid the phrase in this case. Don’t ask questions, speculate about how the death could have been prevented, or dwell on the fact of the suicide; what matters is that the person is gone and the family is grieving. Instead, talk about how the person touched your life, share a happy memory, or express sympathy for the bereaved’s pain.

- Those who live with AIDS are first of all your friends, neighbors, and relatives, and only second someone with a usually fatal illness. Write as you would to anyone with a serious illness. Don’t assume the person’s time is short. Some AIDS patients have good years ahead of them in spite of recurrent crises. It’s more important to be supportive and to send a card than to say exactly the right thing. Focus on how special the person is to you rather than on their illness, their prognosis, the sadness of it all. Ask if they’d like company; because of the perceived nature of AIDS, some people are unwilling to visit and your friend may appreciate seeing you all the more.

- Responding to news of a divorce or separation is difficult, unless you’re well acquainted with the person you’re addressing. Neither expressions of sympathy nor congratulations are entirely appropriate in most cases. However, whether the person is “better off” or not, such life changes are never without their sad aspects and mourned losses, and a message of sympathy and support is often welcome.

- Don’t hesitate to write to people experiencing a misfortune considered embarrassing (a family member convicted of a crime, for example); if friends and family are hurting, your warm message of support will be welcome.

- When business associates, customers, clients, or employees lose someone close to them, write as you would for friends or relatives, although your note will be shorter and more formal. Avoid personal remarks; it is enough to say you are thinking about them at this time. Extend sympathy on behalf of the company and convey condolences to other members of the person’s family. When writing to the family

of an employee who has died, you can offer assistance in gathering personal effects, discuss the pension plan, or make a referral to someone in the company who can help with questions.

- Those who are grieving the death of a companion animal will appreciate a note of sympathy. This loss can be devastating; whether one can identify with the feelings or not, expressing sympathy is a loving, respectful gesture.

- When someone has lost a close family member, remember the person with a special note on the anniversary of the person's death and (in the case of a spouse) on the couple's wedding anniversary date. Don't worry about "bringing up sad memories." The person will hardly think of anything else on that day, and will be grateful for the supportive note that says somebody remembers. Those who plan class reunions might send cards or flowers to parents of deceased classmates to assure them that their children are remembered.

- A letter to someone terminally or very seriously ill is more of a sympathy letter than a "get well" letter, but be careful not to anticipate someone's death. Avoid mention of imminent death unless the person has introduced the subject and shows a desire to talk about it. Instead, say how sorry you are to hear that the person is ill and that you are thinking of them. Instead of a "Get Well" card, choose one of the "Thinking of You" or no-message cards.

- When sending flowers to a funeral home, address the accompanying small card's envelope to "The family of Emily Webb Gibbs." Insert a plain white card from the florist or your own visiting or business card with a brief message ("Please accept my sincerest sympathy" or "My thoughts and prayers are with you and the children"). If you make a donation to a charity in the deceased person's name, give the name and address of a family member as well as your own. The charity will send a notice of the contribution to the family and acknowledge to you that the donation was received.

## Format

- The personal letter of sympathy is always handwritten, unless a disability prohibits it. Use plain personal stationery or foldovers (no bright colors or fussy design).

- Commercial greeting cards are acceptable as long as you add a personal line or two (or more).

- Sympathy letters can be typed when writing a customer, client, employee, or colleague whom you don't know well but with whom you have business dealings. Use business-personal rather than full-size letterhead stationery.

**WORDS**

affection	bereavement	bitter	blow
comfort	commiserate	compassion	concerned
consolation	devastating	difficult	distressed
faith	grief	hardship	healing
heartache	heartbroken	heartsick	heavyhearted
hope	misfortune	mourn	ordeal
overcome	regret	remember	saddened
severe	shaken	share	shocked
sorrow	sorry	suffering	sympathy
touched	tragic	trouble	trying
unfortunate	unhappy	unwelcome	upset

**PHRASES**

although I never met	at a loss for words
beautiful/blessed/cherished memories	deepest sympathy
deeply saddened	during this difficult time
extremely/terribly/so sorry to hear of	family sorrow
feel fortunate to have known grand person	feel the loss of
greatly/sadly/sorely missed	greatly saddened
grieve/mourn with you	grieved to hear/learn of your loss
I remember so well	heart goes out to
	I was saddened to learn/so sorry to heart that
in your time of great sorrow	legacy of wisdom, humor, and love of family
long be remembered for	made a difference in many lives
many friends share your grief	no words to express my great/overwhelming/sincere/deep sorrow
offer most sincere/heartfelt/deepest sympathy	one of a kind
profound sorrow	rich memories

sad change in your circumstances	sad event/news/bereavement
send my condolences/our deepest sympathy	sharing in your grief/sorrow during this difficult time
shocked and profoundly grieved/saddened	sick at heart
sincere condolences	sorry to learn/hear about
so special to me	stunned by the news
terrible blow	touched to the quick
tragic news	trying time
upsetting news	warmest sympathy
wish to extend our condolences/sympathy	with sincere feeling/personal sorrow/love and sympathy/sorrow and concern

## SENTENCES

All of us are the poorer for Patrick's death.

Dora was a wonderful person, talented and loving, and I know that you and your family have suffered a great loss.

How sad I was to hear of Hsuang Tsang's sudden death.

I am thinking of you in this time of sorrow.

I can still see the love in his face when he watched you tell a story.

I feel privileged to have counted Fanny as a friend.

I hope you don't mind, but Marion Halcombe told us about your recent bad luck and I wanted to tell you how sorry we were to hear it.

I know Phillip had many admiring friends, and I am proud to have been one of them.

I remember the way your mother made all your friends feel so welcome with her questions, her fudge, and her big smiles.

It seems impossible to speak of any consolation in the face of such a bitter loss.

It was with great sadness/sense of loss/profound sorrow that I learned of Ramona's death.

I was so sorry to hear that Mr. Golovin's long and courageous battle with cancer has ended.

I wish I weren't so far away.

I write this with a heavy heart.



Like so many others who were drawn to Yancy by his charm, courage, and warmth, I am deeply grieved and bewildered by his unexpected death.

Please extend our condolences to the members of your family.

Professor Bhaer will always remain alive in the memories of those who loved, respected, and treasured him.

The loss of your warm and charming home saddened us all.

The members of the Crestwell Women's Club send you their deepest sympathy.

The world has lost someone very special.

We always enjoyed Dr. Stanton's company and respected him so much as a competent, caring physician and surgeon.

We were grieved to hear that your baby was stillborn.

We were stunned to hear that you lost your job, but are hopeful that someone with your experience and qualifications will find something suitable—maybe even better.

We who knew and loved Varena have some idea of how great your loss truly is.

You and the family are much in our thoughts these days.

Your grief is shared by many.

## PARAGRAPHS

We felt so bad when we heard about the burglary. Something similar happened to us, and it affected me much more deeply and took longer to get over than I would ever have expected. I hope you are not too undone. May we lend you anything? Help put things back in order? Type up an inventory of what's missing? I'll stop by to see what you need.

This will acknowledge your letter of the 16th. Unfortunately, Mr. Newman is vacationing in a wilderness area this week, but I know he will be most distressed to learn of your brother's death when he returns. Please accept my sympathy on your loss—Mr. de Bellegarde visited here only once, but he left behind the memory of a charming, generous man.

Helen's death is a sad loss for you and for many others at Zizzbaum & Son. We too will sorely miss her, both from a personal and from a professional standpoint. As you know, we could not have been more pleased with her work for us over the past five years. She made many good friends here, and we all send you our heartfelt sympathy.

It's been a year today since Hebble died, and I wanted to tell you that we think of him often and with great affection. You must still miss him very much. I hope you are keeping busy and managing to find small happinesses in everyday things. We will be passing through Cool Clary in March, and hope to see you then.

The staff and student body join me in extending our sympathy to you on the death of your father. I have heard the stories you tell about this delightful and determined man, and I am sure this is a great loss for you. A special donation has been made to the scholarship fund. Next year, one of the scholarships will carry his name.

There is no good time for a tragedy, of course, but I know that you were in the midst of completing plans for the national conference. Would it help if I tied up the loose ends for you? You are so organized I'm sure I'll have no trouble following your notes. Just say the word if this is something I could do for you. And, again, please accept my most sincere sympathies on your sister's death.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Mr. Latch,

I was so sorry to hear of Mrs. Latch's death. Although I haven't seen you since I left Barfield, I have often thought with great affection and pleasure of those wonderful days we spent together at the races. Please accept my sympathy on your sad loss.

Yours truly,

Dear Mary and Jessie,

We were all so sorry to hear about your father's death. He was a fine man, and all of Cranford is in mourning for him. I remember seeing him take the two of you for a walk each evening after dinner when you were just little girls. I hope your memories of him will be some comfort to you.

Please accept our sympathy and good wishes.

Sincerely,

Dear Lydia,

I was shocked to hear of Noel's death; you must be devastated. You and Noel were always closer than any married couple I know. I can only hope that your years of happiness and your many good memories will enable you to live with this sad loss.

Affectionately yours,

•

Dear Dr. and Mrs. Primrose,

Please accept my sympathy on the fire that leveled your home. I understand you and your family are staying temporarily with the Thornhills. As soon as you begin rebuilding, please let me know—I would like to help.

My husband joins me in hoping that you and the children will soon be back in your own home.

With best wishes,

Dear Jody,

We were all sorry to hear the sad news. Flag was much more than a pet, I know, and you must be wondering if you'll ever feel happy again. I'm enclosing a picture that I took of you and Flag about a month ago. I hope it doesn't make you sad, but brings back good memories instead.

Love,

Dear Eden,

Harriet tells me that your divorce from Alayne is now final. Please accept my sympathies for the difficult experience this must have been. I also send my best wishes for a bright and happy future. I'll call you next week to see if you have time to get together.

Your friend,

Dear Ms. Abinger:

I was sorry to hear of the recent flooding you've had at the Corner Stores. It is one of those horror stories that haunt the dreams of self-employed businesspeople everywhere. I wish you all good luck in getting things back to normal as quickly as possible.

I wanted to assure you that although I will temporarily order my supplies elsewhere, I will be bringing my business back to you as soon as you are ready. I appreciate our long association and am looking forward to doing business with you again.

Sincerely,

Dear Leora and Martin,

Please accept our most heartfelt condolences on your miscarriage. I know how much you were both looking forward to welcoming this child into your lives.

Will you let us know the moment you feel up to a quiet visit? We would like to stop by with a couple of our warmest hugs.

With love and sympathy,

Dear Kitty and Chris,

We were stunned to hear the tragic news about Oliver. Everyone who knows you must be appalled and heartbroken at the loss of your bright, charming, lovable son. There are no words to adequately express our sympathy for the devastation and profound loss you must be feeling. Please know we are thinking of you and praying for you every minute.

In talking with Chris's mother, we learned that you are without a car because of the accident. We're leaving one of the demo cars for your use as long as you need it. Please let us do this; there is no need to call or to discuss it.

We'll be seeing you in the next couple of days. Until then, we send all our love and deepest sympathy.

Sincerely,

See also: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, BELATED, "GET WELL," RESPONSES, THANK YOU.

# Thank-You Letters

*His courtesy was somewhat extravagant. He would write and thank people who wrote to thank him for wedding presents and when he encountered anyone as punctilious as himself the correspondence ended only with death.*

—EVELYN WAUGH

Thank-you letters enhance business and personal relationships and handsomely reward those who make a practice of sending them. Despite this, people find them difficult to write, which is perhaps why so many arrive late or not at all.

When you're unsure if a thank you is necessary, err on the side of "necessary." Even when you have graciously thanked someone in person, a written thank you is often expected or required or, at the least, appreciated. In the business world, the thank-you note has become a must if you care about your career. "Anyone too busy to say thank you will get fewer and fewer chances to say it." (Harvey Mackay)

For wedding gift thank yous, see WEDDINGS.

## Write Thank-You Letters for

- appreciation/congratulations/recognition
- contributions: fundraising drives/memorials/charities
- employee suggestions/outstanding efforts/jobs well done
- expressions of sympathy
- favors/kindness/assistance/special help/advice
- gifts: business/personal
- hospitality: business/personal
- job interviews
- money: gifts/bonuses/loans
- orders: new/unusual
- patronage: new account/first purchase/good customer
- referrals: customers/clients/patients
- requested information/materials/documents
- sales prospects
- wedding and wedding shower gifts (see WEDDINGS)

## How to Say It

- Describe in some detail what you are grateful for (not just “the lovely gift” or “the nice present”).
- Express your gratitude in an enthusiastic, appreciative way.
- Elaborate on your appreciation. Tell how useful or appropriate it is, how you plan to use it, where you have placed it, or how it enhances your life, home, office, wardrobe. Be specific about what pleased you.
- Close with one or two sentences unrelated to the object of your gratitude (expressing affection, promising to see the person soon, sending greetings to family members, saying something nice about the donor).

## What Not to Say

- Don’t dilute your thanks by including news, information, questions, and comments; save them for another time.
- When you receive duplicate gifts, don’t mention this to the givers.
- Don’t ask where the gift was purchased so you can exchange it.
- Some etiquette authorities say not to mention the amount of a money gift. They suggest instead speaking of the giver’s kindness, generosity, or, perhaps, extravagance. However, if both you and the gift-giver are comfortable with a mention of the amount, this is an acceptable choice.
- A few letterwriting experts dislike the “Thanks again” that concludes so many thank-you letters and notes. However, it is a popular and benign way of reminding the reader of the purpose of the letter. If you like it, use it.
- “Never express more than you feel” is a good guideline, especially in thank-you letters, where we try to make up in verbiage what we lack in enthusiasm. A simple “thank you” is effective.

## Tips on Writing

- Write soon. It’s easier to find the words when you feel grateful than it is after your enthusiasm has cooled. It’s also more courteous. Most givers don’t need your thanks as much as they need to know if the gift arrived (especially if it was sent from a store) and if it pleased you. Some people think a thank-you note should be written within three days of receiving a gift. Certainly two weeks would be a maximum. For a stay in someone’s home, write within one to three days, but certainly within a week; for dinners and other hospitality, within a day or two. When responding to expressions of sympathy, you have

up to six weeks because of the special hardships involved. For “get well” gifts, wait until you are well enough to write comfortably (a friend can acknowledge gifts for you in the meantime).

- You are not obliged to write a thank you (although of course it is always in excellent taste and will be greatly appreciated if you do) for: a party at which you were not the guest of honor; a casual dinner, lunch, or cocktail party; birthday, anniversary, congratulations, and “get well” cards and greetings; favors and hospitality extended by people with whom you are close (a sibling, a neighbor) and with whom you have reciprocal arrangements. In these cases, thank the person by telephone or the next time you see them.

- Overnight hospitality always warrants a thank-you note—and usually a gift, which you bring with you or send afterwards (popular items are specialty foods, houseplants, flowers, something for the house, toys for the children). When you write a family, address the parents, but mention the children by name (and if you say something complimentary about them, you will have more than justified your invitation). If you write to only the one who invited you or the one who was primarily responsible for your comfort, extend your thanks to the other household members.

## Special Situations

- A late “thank you” is harder to defend than any other delayed message, but it is better to write late than not at all. In his delightful manners book for children, *How Rude!*, Alex J. Packer tells them, “Thank-you notes get exponentially more difficult to write with each day that passes. By the second day, they are *four* times harder to write. By the third day, they are *nine* times harder, and if you wait twelve days, they are 144 times harder to write!” Don’t spend more than a phrase or a sentence apologizing for the delay: “My thanks are no less sincere for being so unforgivably late.” “I am sorry not to have told you sooner how much we enjoyed the petit fours.”

- Yes, you send a thank-you note for a thank-you gift, if for no other reason than to let the person know it arrived.

- When someone donates money to a charity in your honor or in memory of a deceased relative, the charity will acknowledge the contribution to the donor, usually with a printed card or form letter, but you also write a thank-you note.

- Although the guest or guests of honor at an anniversary party, birthday party, or shower always thank each friend warmly for gifts as they are opened, thank-you notes are still required. The party or shower host should receive a special thank you as well as a small gift.

- An essential job-seeking technique as well as a gesture of courtesy is to thank the person who interviews you. Write a note immediately

after the interview and before a decision has been made. State what you liked about the interview, the company, the position. Emphasize briefly and specifically your suitability for the job. Address concerns about your qualifications that came up during the interview. Mention any issue that you didn't have the opportunity to discuss.

- Although business entertaining is often taken for granted, a thank you is appreciated and builds good relations. Notes to a colleague, client, employee, or supplier inspire loyalty, enthusiasm, and increased productivity. When you receive a gift from a business contact, write a thank you, even though you suspect hundreds of gifts were sent. When you are unable to accept a business gift, avoid any implied accusation of poor taste on the giver's part when you write your thank-you-but-I-must-refuse letter; explain simply that your firm doesn't allow you to accept gifts.
- When gifts arrive early for an event, write thank-you notes after the special day.
  - When you receive a gift from more than one person, write personalized thank-you notes to each one. You don't need to do this when you receive a gift from a family (even when all five of them sign the card) or when you receive a gift from a group such as your bridge club, teachers at your school, your co-workers. You can write one letter to the group but circulate or post it so that everyone who contributed sees it.
  - After a death in the family, thank-you notes are written to people who sent flowers or donations, and to those who helped with hot meals, hosted dinners, put up out-of-town relatives, lent chairs, or were otherwise supportive. You also respond to those who sent notes of condolence (exception: those who sent printed cards with only a signature and no personal message). You may use the printed cards supplied by the funeral home if you add a personal note. When the person closest to the deceased is unable to manage the correspondence, a family member or friend writes thank-you notes on their behalf. The notes need not be long and, traditionally, you have up to six weeks after the funeral to send them. To keep track of who sent flowers, a family member or funeral home official should collect the attached cards and write a description of the flowers on them.
  - Send thank-you notes to sales prospects for the time they spend with you on the phone or in the office. Your notes—which take only minutes to write—will secure for you their good will and their increased willingness to speak with you next time. (You also may surprise yourself by liking this part of your work—after the first few notes anyway.)
  - For a few special gifts, you may want to write two thank-you notes, the first when you receive the gift (a check or a fondue set, for example) and the second when you use it (“we used your gift to enroll



in a ballroom dancing class, something we've wanted to do for years" or "we invited the cousins over for fondue and told them that they could thank you too!").

## Format

- Thank-you messages are almost always handwritten on foldovers, note cards, or personal stationery. Typewritten thanks are acceptable when they are part of a long, personal letter to family or friends.
- Use formal printed or engraved stationery to write thank-you notes for important events (weddings, for example).
- Business thank yous are typed on letterhead stationery, personal-business stationery, or good bond paper. When you want a warmer tone, hand-write your note.
- Commercial foldovers with "Thanks" or "Thank you" are convenient and acceptable; a handwritten note goes on the inside page. Contemporary thank-you cards with sentimental or humorous messages are also appropriate as long as a handwritten message is added.
- When you need to thank many people, it is appropriate (and, in some areas, expected) to insert a thank-you notice in the local newspaper. The nurses, doctors, hospital staff, friends, and family who helped someone through a long and demanding illness are often thanked. The funeral of a public figure may inspire hundreds of notes of condolence, which are best acknowledged in a newspaper announcement. Recently elected public officials thank those who worked and voted for them. The wording is simple and warm: "We wish to thank all the generous and loving friends and family who sent cards and gifts on the occasion of our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary."
- Can you e-mail your thanks? In most cases, no. Certainly e-mail is suitable for quick thanks between longtime friends for the loan of a book, a small favor, a light lunch. It can also be used as a down-payment on a "real" thank-you note, written primarily to say that the gift arrived and that a letter will follow. The point of a thank-you note is that it is personal. E-mail has many virtues, but graciousness and formality are not among them.
- Miss Manners (Judith Martin of the *Washington Post*) warns against faxing a thank you to someone who has just bought your product. She points out that the recipient must pay for such a thank you (fax paper, the time the letter occupies the machine, machine depreciation).

## WORDS

appreciate	bountiful	captivated	charming	cherished
classic	delighted	elegant	enchanted	enjoyed

excited	fascinated	favorite	flattered	generosity
gracious	grateful	hospitable	impressed	indebted
invaluable	keepsake	kindness	l a r g e - hearted	lovely
luxurious	memorable	needed	one-of-a- kind	overjoyed
o v e r - whelmed	perfect	pleased	priceless	remarkable
satisfying	sensational	sophistic- ated	special	spectacular
striking	stunned	sumptuous	superb	surprised
tasteful	terrific	thoughtful	thrilled	timeless
timely	touched	treasure	treat	unique
useful	valuable	well-made	wonderful	

## PHRASES

absolutely perfect choice for me	appreciate your confidence/in- terest/kind words/referral
a rare treat	cannot tell you how delighted I was
charming of you	consider me deeply in your debt for
convey my personal thanks to everyone who	deeply appreciate
derived great pleased from	did us good/our hearts good
enjoyable and informative tour	enjoyed it/ourselves enormously
excellent/splendid suggestion	felt right at home
from the bottom of my heart	generous gift
great gift for us	
heartfelt/hearty thanks	
how kind/dear/thoughtful/sweet of you to	how much it meant to us
I am indebted/very much obliged to you for	I have seldom seen such
I'll long remember	important addition to
I plan to use it for/to	I really treasure
it was a great pleasure	it was hospitable/kind of you to

I will never forget	made us feel so welcome
many thanks	meant a great deal to me
more people have remarked on the	more than kind
most sincerely grateful to you for	most thoughtful and generous
much obliged	one of the most memorable days of my trip
one of your usual inspired ideas	perfect gift/present
please accept my gratitude/our sin- cere appreciation	pleased as Punch
profoundly touched by	quite out of the ordinary
really appreciate your help	seventh heaven
so characteristically thoughtful	thoroughly enjoyed myself
tickled our fancy	truly a marvel
truly grateful	very special occasion
we want you to know how much we value	we were especially pleased because
we were simply thrilled/de- lighted/stunned with	what a joy it was to receive
will be used every day/often	with your usual inimitable flair/style
wonderful addition to	you made me feel so special by
you may be sure that I appreciate	you must be a mindreader
your generous gift	your gift meant a lot to me at this time because
your thoughtful/kind expression of sympathy	

## SENTENCES

All of us were touched by your thoughtfulness.

As soon as we decide what to do with your wonderful gift [money] we will let you know.

How dear of you—we are delighted!

How did you know we needed one?

I appreciate your advice more than I can say.

I can't remember when I've had a better/more pleasant/more relaxing/more enjoyable time.

I can't thank you enough for chauffeuring me around while my knee was in the immobilizer.

I'll cherish your gift always.

I love it!

I'm grateful for your help, and hope that I can reciprocate some day.

In the past several weeks, you have kindly referred Harvey Birch, Frances Wharton, and Judith Hunter to the Cooper Architectural Group—we are grateful!

I owe you one!

I plan to use your gift to buy a wok—we've always wanted one.

I treasure the paperweight—it will always remind me of you.

It was kind of you to let me know about the job opening—I'll keep you posted.

I very much appreciate your concern.

Madeleine will be writing you herself, but I wanted to thank you for knowing just what would please a nine-year-old.

More people have remarked on it!

On behalf of the family of Violet Effingham Chiltern, I thank you for your kind expression of sympathy.

Special thanks to the doctors and the nurses at Trewsbury County Hospital. Thanks a million.

Thanks for recommending Bates Craters and Freighters—they've been as good as you said they were.

Thanks for the great advice on patio brick—I'm pleased with what we finally bought.

Thanks for thinking of me.

Thanks for your order and for the interest in Leeds Sporting Goods that prompted it.

Thank you for including me in this memorable/special event.

Thank you for opening a charge account with us recently.

Thank you for shopping regularly at Farrell Power & Light.

Thank you for your courtesy and patience in allowing me to pay off the balance of my Irving Products, Inc. account in small installments.

Thank you for your generous donation to the Dunstone Foundation in memory of James Calpon Amwell; he would have been pleased and I appreciate your comforting gesture very much.

Thank you for your kind hospitality last night; I have never felt less a stranger in a strange city.

Thank you so much for agreeing to speak to our study club.

The letter of reference you so kindly wrote for me must have been terrific—Goodman & Co. called yesterday with a job offer!

This is just a note to thank you for rushing the steel shelving to us in time for our event.

*Visions of Paradise* is a stunning book, and we are all enjoying it immensely.

We all thank you for the tickets to the science museum.

We are thrilled with the handsome brass bookends you sent!

We will never forget the autumn glories of the North Shore—thank you so much for inviting us to share your cabin with you last weekend.

You can see what a place of honor we've given your gift the next time you stop by.

You couldn't have found anything I'd enjoy more.

You shouldn't have, but since you did, may I say that your choice was absolutely inspired!

## PARAGRAPHS

Thank you for agreeing to write a letter of recommendation for me, especially since I know how busy you are this time of year. I'm enclosing a stamped envelope addressed to the personnel officer at Strickland Construction. I will, of course, let you know at once if I get the job. In the meantime, thanks again for your kindness.

I want to thank you for all the time you put into coaching the Crossley-area baseball team this summer. It was a joy to watch you and your enthusiastic players model sporting behavior and team spirit to some of the younger teams. The assistance of our volunteer coaches is crucial to the survival of this program, and the Board of Directors joins me in sending you our admiration and thanks.

On behalf of the directors, staff, and employees of Mallinger Electronics, I want to thank you for your splendid arrangements for the Awards Banquet Night. Decorations, food, program, and hospitality were all first-rate. Please convey our admiration and thanks to your committee chairs. If you can possibly face the thought, we'd like you to chair next year's celebration. The evening was an outstanding success in every way, primarily due to your organizational abilities, creativity, and interpersonal skills.

Thank you so much for the graduation check. As you know, I'm saving everything I earn for college, so when I received your card and gift, I knew right away what I was going to do with it! I've been needing and wanting a decent watch for a long time, and I can hardly wait to choose one. Every time I look at my new watch, I'll think of you with affection and gratitude.

It is my understanding that you wrote a letter supporting my nomin-

ation by the Department of Materials Science and Engineering as a Distinguished Professor. I am happy to inform you that I was indeed honored with this title on June 3, 2002. I am deeply appreciative of your kind support in this regard. Many thanks.

The kindness and generosity you showed to all of us at the time of Edgar's death are much appreciated. What a good idea to send a plant; we've put the chrysanthemums in Edgar's perennial garden. Thanks too for the hot meals, the touching letter that I know you put your whole self into, and for your constant support. We're blessed to count you as a friend.

What a wonderful engagement gift! We haven't even begun to think of planning our wedding as we've heard it's so much work and so complicated. With this marvelous book on wedding planning, I think we can quit worrying.

Your dad said you picked out my tie all by myself. Thank you! Aunt Belinda just took a picture of me wearing the tie and eating a piece of birthday cake. When we get the pictures developed I'll send you one so you can see how nice I look in my new tie.

I would like to thank one of your sales staff for being helpful, tactful, and speedy—all at the same time! I foolishly tried to buy a wedding gift on my lunch hour, and I am a poor shopper at the best of times. Within minutes, this young man helped me select the absolutely perfect gift at the price I wanted to pay. It was all done so smoothly that I was out of the store before I knew it—and before I thought to ask his name. The initials on my sales slip are R.J. Can you identify him and pass on my thanks?

Thanks for the Mozartkugeln! One of my favorite annual rituals is watching the Wimbledon tennis finals in bed (they start at 7:00 a.m.). The women's final was great, and that's when I ate the Mozartkugeln—they were deliciously decadent. When I lived in Salzburg, a shop near my apartment made them daily. They cost about a quarter each then, and every day after class I made my little journey there to get one.

Thank you for the assistance, information, and encouragement you offered us when Hannah was applying to the U.S. Air Force Academy. We're convinced that her acceptance was due in no small measure to your support and advocacy.

Thank you for your most welcome letter of September 28. I am impressed with your generosity in sending complimentary subscriptions of the magazine to our doctors and nurses presently working in Tanzania. They will make good use of them—they estimate that each copy of the magazine is held by over fifty pairs of hands!

I enjoyed this morning's discussion of the research position you want to fill. I was pleased to know that my advanced degree is definitely an asset. I've been "overqualified" for several jobs, and was beginning to wonder if my extra years of study were of any value in the job market. Thanks so much for your time and for the congenial interview.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Mr. Hollingford,

Thank you for remembering my five-year anniversary with the company. I didn't think anyone would notice except me! I've enjoyed working here and plan to stay as long as you'll have me. Thank you, too, for the gift certificate to Sweeney Inn. I have another anniversary coming up (three years of marriage), and I know where we'll celebrate it.

Sincerely,

Dear Aune Esther Koskenmaki Lilley,

Thank you so much for sending us a copy of your book, *Father Said, "Eat, Don't Giggle!"* You are quite right in thinking that our collection of folklore materials can benefit from your contribution, especially since Finnish folklore is of particular interest to our Folk Arts Division.

Again, thank you for your book.

Sincerely,

Dear Agnes and Walter,

Thank you for the lovely silver piggy bank you gave Anabel. It's a classic, and I know she will treasure it all her life. In the meantime, it has a place of honor on her dresser, and we've gotten into the habit of putting our change into it at the end of the day.

Can you come by to see your new little grand-niece sometime next week? We're all feeling rested by now and would love to see you. Give me a call.

With much love,

Dear Millicent,

The dinner party was elegant and memorable, and we were delighted to be included. I don't know anyone who has as much flair and style as you do when it comes to entertaining!

Fondly,

Dear Vincent Crummies:

Thank you for your contribution of \$200 to the Alumni Annual Giving Campaign. As stipulated on the donor card returned to this office, your gift will be designated for the Annual Giving Fund to be used where most needed.

We also appreciate your use of the Langdon Co. matching gifts program and look forward to receiving their one-for-one matching gift. This matching gift will also be directed to the Annual Giving Fund.

Thank you again for your generosity, which will make it possible for

many young women and young men to have the advantage of a quality education.

Very truly yours,

See also: ACCEPTANCES, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, APPRECIATION, BELATED, RESPONSES.



# Letters Related to Travel

*A trip is what you take when you can't take any more of what you've been taking.*

—ADELINE AINSWORTH

Today most travel arrangements (airline, car, hotel reservations; requests for tourist, passport, health information; cancellations) are made by phone, e-mail, or on the Internet. Occasionally, however, a letter or faxed letter is the best choice to outline complicated arrangements, confirm reservations, address special problems, or register a complaint.

Every letter that a travel business writes to customers—even a one-sentence response to a query for information—is a sales or goodwill letter and is courteous, positive, and presentable.

## Write Travel Letters to

- airlines
- bus companies
- campground/RV facilities
- convention and visitors bureaus
- cruise companies
- customers of a travel business
- employers for travel reimbursement
- entertainment/amusement complexes
- friends and relatives
- hotels/motels/B&Bs
- national parks
- railroad companies
- resorts/spas/dude ranches
- tourist information centers
- travel agents

## How to Say It

- Begin with your question or item of business.

- Include specifics: dates; number of nights, people, rooms, type of accommodation, extras, verification of information about accessibility, pool, cable TV, entertaining facilities; type of car, number of days, pickup and dropoff points; record, confirmation, or other locator number; credit card number; your address and telephone number; names of guests or passengers.
- Mention enclosed deposit or coupons.
- Repeat terms or information you were given over the telephone.
- Ask for a confirmation number.
- Close with a courtesy.

### What Not to Say

- Don't volunteer unnecessary personal information.
- Don't put your credit card number in a letter unless you know the company well.
- Don't assume anything. Ask for information when you are not sure about details.

### Tips on Writing

- Aside from standard courtesies ("thank you for your assistance/attention"), you are brief when writing about travel arrangements.
- Put each unit of information on its own line:

*compact car*

*standard transmission*

*airconditioning*

*3 days, May 11-14*

*pickup: New York-JFK*

*dropoff: Boston-Logan*

- When requesting confirmation or a response from a non-U.S. hotel, resort, or travel bureau, especially one on the low-budget end, enclose an International Reply Coupon (available at post offices) to assure a response. If you don't have an IRC, suggest they e-mail or fax their response.

- Take copies of all reservations, confirmation letters, etc., with you as you travel, along with notes on telephone arrangements.

- To inspire you to write travel letters home, read Rudyard Kipling's *Letters of Travel*, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's *Letters from a Traveller*, John Steinbeck's *A Russian Journal*, Michael Crichton's *Travels*. From Phillip Brooks' 1893 *Letters of Travel* and Gertrude Bell's 1894 *Persian Pictures* to Freya Stark's 1929 *Baghdad Sketches* to Joanne Sandstrom's

1983 *There and Back Again* and Erma Bombeck's 1991 *When You Look Like Your Passport Photo, It's Time to Go Home*, you'll find letters to inspire and entertain.

## Special Situations

- When making requests for hotel or motel reservations, include such information as the number of persons in your group, how many rooms you need and whether you want single or double beds, your times of arrival and departure, and any extras you'll need (crib, poolside room, connecting rooms, additional bed, nonsmoking room). Ask for confirmation of your reservation, and indicate how the rooms are to be billed—to you, to a credit card, to your company account—and if you are entitled to a discount of any kind.

- When canceling a travel arrangement, repeat the information in your original letter. (Canceling has become more than courtesy; if you forget to cancel a reservation, your credit card may be charged for the first night.)

- One can hardly say “travel” without thinking “postcards.” If you choose the cards carefully, you will already have something to write (“Our hotel is right by this canal” or “We toured this castle yesterday” or “We went to the top of this mountain in a funicular”). A postcard shows recipients something colorful, interesting, or unknown to them. Your message focuses on your pleasure being there (nobody wants to hear that you've had trouble). Tell what you've liked best, a food you've eaten for the first time, an interesting fact or bit of history, the impact your trip is having on you.

- For information and forms on obtaining or renewing a passport, write: National Passport Center, Federal Building, Chicago, IL 60604. The same information is available online at <http://www.travel.state.gov> and forms can be downloaded.

## Format

- Except for postcards and letters to family and friends, all travel correspondence should be typed to avoid errors.

- Fax and e-mail are often used for travel arrangements.

## WORDS

## WORDS

accommodation	arrangement	availability	booked
cancel	charter	deposit	directions
discount	excursion	fare	lodging
nonrefundable	register	reimburse	rental
reservation	roundtrip	schedule	sightseeing
tour	visa	voyage	

## PHRASES

activities for children	advance purchase requirements
areas of interest	bed and breakfast (B&B)
discount for those over-55	eighteen-hole golf course
especially interested in	flexible schedule
hold for late arrival	map of the area
nearby horseback riding	sightseeing/tour package
sports facilities	travel insurance
youth hostel	

## SENTENCES

Attached is a completed form about the luggage lost November 8 on flight # 78 as well as photos and descriptions of the missing luggage.

Enclosed are the reimbursable hotel, meal, and car rental receipts from my trip to Miami February 10-14.

Is your resort fully accessible to someone who uses a wheelchair?

I would like to dispute the \$150 charge for changing the return date on my ticket.

Please send a brochure and rates for the Kokua Family Resort.

Sweeting-Nunnely Telecommunications is considering holding its annual shareholders' meeting in your area and would appreciate your sending us information on your convention center, hotels, area attractions, and any other material that would be helpful in making our decision.

This will confirm the cancellation of our reservation at the Doddington Dude Ranch.

We will be spending the month of July in Sundering-on-Sea and would appreciate receiving a map of the area, train schedules, a calendar of local events, and anything else that would help acquaint us with your area.

## PARAGRAPHS

You asked about transportation between the airport and the hotel. We operate a free shuttle service that leaves the airport every half-hour between the hours of 7 a.m. and midnight from the Ground Transportation area. Look for the Crossley Hotels logo on the bus.

Your room will be billed on the group account for the convention so you do not have a confirmation number. However, at check-in give your name and say you are with Gammon, Quirk & Co.

As discussed in our telephone conversation this morning, we will arrive at the Lowborough Hotel at approximately 3 p.m., Thursday, August 31. Thank you for your willingness to reserve a parking space with orange traffic pylons for our 24' rental moving truck. I wouldn't like to depend on chance to find a parking place for a truck that size, especially in Boston!

I very much enjoyed my stay at the O'Reilly McMurrough International Hotel. However, I thought you'd like to know that when I tried to use the telephone, the "2" dialed 911. So did the "9." So did every other button. It was most disconcerting and a worrying nuisance for the emergency personnel on the other end of the calls. The iron also needs to be replaced; the plate is stained and it slightly damaged my dress.

Please accept this coupon good for one free night at the O'Reilly McMurrough International Hotel to apologize for the malfunctioning telephone and iron. We value your business and appreciate the courtesy of your letter.

We are planning to vacation in Seattle next June. Will you please send us information on hotels, a map of the area, descriptions of attractions, a list of events scheduled for that month, and a report of average June temperatures and rainfall?

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Mrs. Hawkins,

I would like to reserve a single room at the Admiral Benbow Inn for July 7-17. I will be arriving late on the evening of July 7 so please hold the room for my arrival. Enclosed is a check for the first night.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

TO: Granby Airlines  
FAX: 212/555-1000  
FROM: Julia Hazelrigg  
DATE: Sept. 4, 2002  
RECORD LOCATOR: # 4GMEN5  
NUMBER OF PAGES: 2

In reference to today's telephone conversation, please cancel both reservations under record locator number # 4GMEN5.

My traveling companion was hospitalized suddenly yesterday for an indefinite period (attached is a note from the physician's office).

I understand that according to your policy for international flights, you offer a complete refund of all tickets in a party when one of the party must cancel due to illness.

I appreciate your compassion and prompt help at this difficult time.

Dear Knox Motor Inn,

I would like to reserve a no-smoking room in your hotel for two nights, June 19 and 20.

My husband and I have two sets of twins (ages six months and two-and-a-half years) so we will need four cribs and an extra set of sheets per crib. The room should also have two double beds since I spend much of the night nursing the infants and my husband spends much of the night comforting the toddlers.

We have lots of nighttime crying in our life just now so if you could please give us a room in a secluded wing of your hotel I'm sure your other patrons would appreciate it very much.

Please send confirmation of our reservation to our address as shown below.

Thank you!

See also: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, ADJUSTMENTS, COMPLAINTS, FAXES, MEMOS, REQUESTS.

# Wedding Correspondence

*I joined a singles group in my neighborhood. The other day the president called me up and said, "Welcome to the group. I want to find out what kind of activities you like to plan." I said, "Well, weddings."*

—LYNN HARRIS

All correspondence relating to weddings or commitment ceremonies, including engagements, is in this chapter. However, supporting advice may also be found in the chapters on ACCEPTANCES, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, BELATED, CONGRATULATIONS, INVITATIONS, REFUSALS, REQUESTS, RESPONSES, THANK YOU.

The only hard-and-fast rules for weddings and wedding correspondence today are those requiring courtesy, appropriateness, and common sense. The guidelines given below blend tradition and contemporary custom to provide you with a framework onto which you can sculpt your own individual tastes and circumstances.

## Wedding Correspondence Includes

- acknowledging gifts
- announcements: printed/engraved/newspaper
- cancellation
- confirmation of arrangements
- congratulations on wedding
- families of wedding couple exchanging letters
- informing ex-spouse of remarriage
- invitations: showers/parties/dinners/wedding
- postponement
- responses: invitations/announcements
- selecting ceremony participants: attendants/presider/organist/musicians/reception helpers
- showers: invitations/thank yous
- thanking people for gifts/favors/greetings/assistance

## How to Say It

- Engagement announcements can be made in one of four ways. (1) Handwrite individual letters to family and friends that include: name of the person you are to marry; wedding date (if known); if you choose, tell briefly how you met and how long you've known the person; some expression of your happiness; a personal comment (the other person is the first to know, you can't wait for them to meet your intended). (2) Insert an announcement in the newspaper that includes: your full names; hometowns; parents' names and hometowns; education backgrounds and places of employment; date of wedding or general plans ("a spring wedding is planned"). Some newspapers have requirements and deadlines for engagement announcements, and some will run either an engagement or a wedding announcement, but not both, so check beforehand. (3) Send formal printed or engraved engagement announcements: "Maria and Ernest Rockage announce the engagement of their daughter Phyllis to Stephen Newmark. An August wedding is planned." (4) Invite family and friends to a dinner party or other event at which the engagement is announced.
- Broken engagements need no announcement if no formal announcement was made. If you've written family and friends of the engagement, write the same type of personal note saying simply that you and the other person have broken your engagement; there's no need to explain why.
- When writing to ask friends or relatives to serve as attendants, state what you are asking and who pays for what. Offer them a graceful way of refusing so that they don't feel pressured. Express your appreciation for their friendship.
- Although many arrangements for weddings and commitment ceremonies are made by telephone, you often write letters of confirmation to the temple, church, or location where the ceremony is to be held; to the person who will officiate; to the sexton, organist, cantor, soloist, musicians; to your attendants, ushers, and others; to the photographer and videotaper; to the florist, jeweler, bakery; to hotels to make honeymoon arrangements; to the caterer or club for the reception; to order gifts for attendants, the aisle carpet, candles, ribbons, decorations. These different letters have three requirements in common: give all possible details; ask everything you need to know at the outset; keep copies of your correspondence.
- When hosting a wedding shower send handwritten invitations or commercial shower invitations that include: name of the honoree or honorees (bride-to-be, groom-to-be, the couple); type of shower (kitchen, tool, bath, garden, recipe, household); time, date, and place; R.S.V.P. or Regrets only; name, address, and telephone number of



the host. Each guest is thanked for their gift at the shower, but thank-you notes are still sent to each person (even those who “went in together” on a gift) soon after the shower. The shower host receives a small gift as well as an especially warm thank you.

- Wedding invitations are engraved, printed, or handwritten. Many papers, typeface styles, inks, and designs are available at printers, stationery stores, and large department stores. The more formal the wedding, the more formal the invitations. Formal wedding invitations have two envelopes: the outer one is sealed for mailing, carries your return address, and is hand-addressed; the inner envelope, which contains the invitation (face up as you open the envelope), is unsealed (the flap has no glue) and carries the names of the invitees on the front. There may also be a sheet of tissue paper to protect the engraving, and enclosures such as at-home cards, reception cards, pew cards for a large wedding, maps indicating location of ceremony and reception, and admission cards if the ceremony or reception is held in a public place. Reply cards are inserted in envelopes addressed to you (printed or engraved) and stamped, and then placed in the inner envelope. Concern about our wasteful use of paper prompts some people to omit the inner envelope or to use recycled paper for their invitations. Reply envelopes are at least 5" x 3 1/2" to comply with postal regulations. If you aren't using reply cards, include an address or telephone number below the R.S.V.P. so that guests know where to respond. For a small, casual wedding, handwrite invitations in black ink (perhaps a friend will offer calligraphy skills) on good-quality white or off-white notepaper or foldovers. Write in the first-person, in the same way that you would extend any informal invitation. Printed or engraved invitations are rarely sent for a small wedding. Your invitation includes: names of bride and groom; date, time, place; mention of hospitality to follow, if any; expression of pleasure at having guests celebrate with you. The invitation, whether formal or informal, may be issued by the couple, by both their parents, by the woman's parents, by the man's parents, or by a relative or family friend—in short, by whoever is hosting the event or whoever is most appropriate. A deceased parent is not named in the invitation as though it were being issued by her or him, but the person can be included if the invitation is sent by the bride and groom (“Jean Lucas, daughter of Martha Lucas and the late George Lucas, and Bruce Wetheral, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Henry Wetheral, request the honour of your presence...”).
- Addressing invitations is an art in itself. On the outer envelope, list full names and addresses, with no abbreviations, if possible. On the inner envelope, repeat last names only (“Mr. and Mrs. Hollingrake”). Don't include young children's names on the outer envelope but list their first names under the parents' names on the inner envelope. (Never add “and family.”) Older children (between thirteen and

eighteen) receive their own invitations. Address one invitation using both full names to an unmarried couple living together. Your return address goes in the upper left-hand corner, unless you use embossed or engraved envelopes, in which case it is on the back flap. (Note that the U.S. Postal Service discourages placing return addresses on the back flap.) Use a good-quality fountain pen, felt tip, or narrow-tipped calligraphy pen to address the envelopes.

- Wedding cancellation announcements are similar in style and format to the invitations. If formal wedding invitations were sent, formal cancellation announcements are sent; they shouldn't be as lavish as the invitations, but should be of approximately the same quality. The message is simple: "Marjorie Corder and Theodore Honey announce that their marriage on the twenty-first of April, two thousand and three, will not take place."
- Printed, engraved, or handwritten announcements, modeled on the wedding invitation, are sent to those who weren't invited to the ceremony or reception. The same type of stationery is used, and the wording is similar. If formal invitations were sent, the announcements will also be formal; if the wedding was small and informal and invitations were handwritten, the announcements will also be handwritten. They are mailed as near the wedding date as possible (address them in advance), and may include at-home cards. The announcement is made by the bride's family ("Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Gray announce the marriage of their daughter Polly to..."); by the couple themselves ("Camilla Christy and Matthew Haslam announce their marriage on Saturday, the fifth of June..."); or by both sets of parents ("Evelyn and Peter Gresham and Bridget and Henry Derricks announce the marriage of their daughter and son, Audrey Gresham and George Derricks, on Friday, the third of April, two thousand and three, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Golding, Nebraska").
- Reply to all wedding invitations. Use the formal reply card or, if there isn't one, use the same wording and degree of formality as the invitation to either "accept with pleasure" or "decline with regret." It is not improper to reply informally to a formal invitation. What is absolutely imperative is that you respond. (You need not respond if you are invited to the wedding ceremony only.) When accepting an invitation to a wedding reception, accept only for those people named on the invitation. If your children are not listed, they are not invited. It is highly improper to bring them to the reception. In the same way, if your envelope doesn't have "and guest" written on it, do not bring someone with you.
- Etiquette on thank-you notes for wedding gifts is inflexible: a handwritten thank you is sent for every gift, even if you thanked the individual in person or if you work with the person every day. Both newlyweds are responsible for thank-you notes; whoever writes mentions the other person ("Mae and I appreciate..."; "Hugh joins

me in..."). Tradition allowed a month after the wedding to mail thank-you notes and contemporary authorities allow up to three months. However, the advice here is to send them immediately after the honeymoon. "The path of later leads to the house of never" (Donald E. Walker) and for many couples the three months turn into six, which turn into a year, which turns into embarrassment and denial and, finally, a guilty forgetfulness. Because everybody is busy today—even the people who found time to send you a gift—there's no excuse for not making a priority of sending wedding thank-you notes.

- Each thank-you note includes: a mention of the gift ("the silver bread tray," not "your lovely gift"); an expression of pleasure; a

### What Not to Say

- In formal wedding invitations and announcements, don't abbreviate anything except "Mr.," "Mrs.," "Ms.," "Jr.," and sometimes military rank. ("Doctor" is written out unless the name following it is too long.) In the case of initials in names, either supply the name for which an initial stands or omit the initial altogether. Write out "Second" and "Third" after a name or use Roman numerals ("Caspar Goodwood II"). There is no comma between the name and the numeral, although there is a comma between the name and "Jr." ("Caspar Goodwood, Jr."). The names of states are spelled out ("Alabama," not Ala. or AL) as are dates ("November third") and the time ("half past eight o'clock," "half past five o'clock"). All numbers under 100 are spelled out. No punctuation is used except for commas after the days of the week ("Saturday, the sixteenth of June") or periods after "Mr.," "Mrs.," "Jr." No words are capitalized except for people's names, place names, and days of the week or months. The year is not included on wedding invitations, but is usually included on announcements.
- When writing thank-you notes for wedding gifts, don't ask where a gift was purchased so that you can exchange it, and don't mention duplication of gifts.

### Tips on Writing

- Traditionally "the honour of your presence" indicates a religious ceremony and "the pleasure of your company" is used for civil weddings or for wedding receptions.

- Watch for nonparallel forms when referring to the wedding couple in invitations, announcements, and other wedding correspondence—for example, "the marriage of Adela Polperro to Mr. Lucian Gildersleeve." Use honorifics for both (Ms. and Mr., for example) or

for neither (neither is preferred). The phrase “man and wife” is “husband and wife” or “man and woman.”

- **Timing:** ask friends to be your attendants as soon as you have a date; order printed or engraved invitations at least three months before the wedding; begin to address invitations two months or more before the wedding (the envelopes can be picked up earlier than the invitations); mail all invitations at the same time—between three and six weeks before the wedding.

- If you use reply cards, invitees will know how to respond. If you don't, insert an address or telephone number below the R.S.V.P. so they know where to send their responses.

- In her 1941 book, Mary Owens Crowther tells readers mailing wedding invitations: “Do not use two one-cent stamps in place of a two-cent stamp. Somehow one-cent stamps are not dignified.” Although her advice is dated, considering the appearance of your postage stamps is not; most invitations and announcements use attractive or meaningful commemorative stamps.

- When you receive an engagement or wedding announcement, there is no obligation to send a gift, but it is customary to write your congratulations to the engaged or newly married couple. You may properly offer either one your “congratulations” or “best wishes.” (These expressions used to be sex-linked; one was limited to use for the woman, one for the man.)

- If you are late with your wedding congratulations, write anyway. Most people will understand and will be pleased that you remembered at all. Apologize only briefly for the delay.

- Jot a brief description of the wedding gift on the back of the signed card that accompanies it. This has proved useful to more than a few newly married couples trying to determine which of the mystery gifts came from whom.

## Special Situations

- In today's over-scheduled world, many couples send “save the date” letters or even e-mails to notify family and friends of a wedding that may be a year or more in the future. Invitations are sent later in the normal way, six weeks before the wedding. While six weeks' notice was ample in the days when families and friends lived in the same small town and knew each other's news, today it is inadequate for making flight reservations, scheduling vacations around the date, or keeping the work calendar free for that day.

- For a wedding announcement published in the newspaper, include as much of the following as allowed: bride's and groom's full names; date, time, and place of wedding; name of officiator or presider; names of members of the wedding party (and relation to the wedding couple);

names, hometowns, and occupations or accomplishments of the couple's parents (and occasionally grandparents); information on the couple's education and careers; description of the flowers, music, and wedding party's clothes; where the reception was held; the couple's address after marriage. (If the woman keeps her birth name or if the couple adopts a hyphenated name, this is a good way to let people know: "Marian Belthem and Augustus F.G. Richmond will be living at 1871 Meredith.") Avoid nicknames and abbreviations. Call your newspaper in advance for guidelines on submitting wedding announcements. Some newspapers publish information about weddings only if there is news value. Others charge a fee for announcements. Some will publish either an engagement notice or a wedding announcement, but not both. And others will not print an announcement if it is "old news"—arriving more than several weeks after the wedding. Some want the information about three weeks before the wedding so that it can be run the day after the wedding. Wedding announcements can also be sent to employee newsletters, alumnae/alumni magazines, or other affiliation publications.

- When the bride, the groom, or both are members of the military, it's customary to use their rank on invitations and announcements unless they are noncommissioned officers or enlisted personnel, in which case it may be omitted.

- Prospective in-laws appreciate a gracious note of welcome by members of the family.

- When you invite some people to the wedding and others to both wedding and reception, your wedding invitation mentions the ceremony only. Enclose a card (about 3" x 4", and of the same style stationery as the invitation) with an invitation to the reception. It is a shortened form of the wedding invitation: "Nora Hopper and George Trimmins request the pleasure of your company at their wedding reception [or: a reception following their wedding], on Saturday, the twelfth of June, Walter Village Inn, 55 North Walter Street. R.S.V.P." If all guests are invited to both the wedding and reception, you add, after the place of the wedding on your invitation, "Reception immediately following" or "and afterward at..." or "followed by a reception at..."

- When prospective wedding guests indicate in their acceptance that they are bringing a friend or their children, whom you have not invited, write that you are pleased they can come to the wedding but that the reception is limited to those invited because of space or is for adults only. When you invite friends who may not know anyone at the reception, you can either call them for the name of a companion (so you can send a personal invitation) or add "and Guest" to their invitation.

- To inform friends and relatives of your address after marriage, enclose an at-home card in your wedding invitation or announcement.

It is usually the same style as your other wedding stationery, about 23/4" x 4": "Linda Condon and Arnaud Hallet will be at home after the sixth of June at 1918 Hergesheimer Road, Waunakee, Wisconsin 53597."

- To let family and friends know that the woman plans to keep her birth name or that the couple is adopting a hyphenated or an altogether new surname, insert a small printed or engraved card (matching the wedding stationery) in the wedding invitation or announcement: "After their marriage, Clarissa Graham and Charles Belton will use the surname Belton-Graham," or "Clarissa Graham wishes to announce that following her marriage she will retain her birth name."

## Format

- Engagement or wedding announcement notices sent to newspapers are typed and double-spaced. If a photograph accompanies it, identify it on the back in case it gets separated from the announcement. (Use a return-address label or taped-on piece of paper; don't write directly on the back of the photo.)

- Wedding invitations and announcements are engraved, printed, or handwritten. A bewildering variety of papers, type styles, inks, and designs are available at printers, stationery stores, and large department stores. Ecu remains the most popular color for invitations and social stationery. Your choice depends on the type of wedding—the more formal the wedding, the more formal the invitations and announcements. You can order matching name cards, thank-you notes, informals, notepaper, or other stationery at the same time.

- Envelopes (for example, for reply cards and thank-you notes) must be at least 3½" x 5" to comply with postal regulations. And if your invitations are oversized or weigh more than an ounce (which happens with high-quality paper and two envelopes) they will need extra postage.

- When responding to an invitation that contained no reply card, use formal notepaper or foldovers. If you have a card with your name on it, write underneath your name "accepts with pleasure" or "declines with regret" and then repeat the information about the event and the date.

## WORDS

acknowledge

announce

bless

celebrate

ceremony

congratulations

happiness

joy

marriage

matrimony

nuptials

pleasure

ritual

union

vows

wishes

**PHRASES**

acknowledges with thanks the receipt of	groom's dinner
happy to announce/to invite you to invite you to celebrate with us	help us celebrate our wedding
our fondest congratulations	joined in holy matrimony
request the honour of your presence	rehearsal dinner
share in the joy	request the pleasure of your company
wedding party	united in wedlock
wish to acknowledge the receipt of	we would be honored to witness our marriage

**SENTENCES**

Aurelia and I were greatly touched by the beautiful family tea service you gave us for our wedding—we feel we're now connected to all the family that's gone before and all that is yet to come.

Best wishes on your wedding day!

Jane Vallens and Andrew Satchel gratefully acknowledge the receipt of your beautiful wedding gift and look forward to writing you a personal note of thanks at an early date.

Jesse joins me in thanking you for the oil painting you did especially for us—it is our first piece of original art!

Mary Llewellyn and Martin Hallam request the pleasure of your company at the marriage of their daughter Mary Frances.

Our very best wishes to you both for many years of happiness, health, and prosperity.

Please join us in celebrating the marriage of our daughter Sally to William Carter.

Thank you for your generous check, which will go a long way toward helping us buy the piano we have our eye on!

The ceremony will take place at 1:30 p.m., and a reception at the house will follow.

We're sorry, but we are limited in the number of guests we can have at the reception—we hope you'll still be able to come and that we can meet your cousin some other time.

We were delighted to hear of your engagement—Anita is an intelligent, beautiful, and kind young woman, and the two of you are beautifully matched!

We wish you every happiness as you celebrate the love you have for each other.

## PARAGRAPHS

We would like to make an appointment with you to discuss the music for our wedding, which is scheduled for June 16 at 1:00 p.m. We have some ideas (and will bring some music with us), but we would appreciate some suggestions from you.

Julia and I will be married at our apartment on Saturday, June eighteenth at 5:30 p.m. It would mean a great deal to us if you would join us for the ceremony and for dinner afterwards.

You could not have chosen a more exquisite gift than the Waterford clock. I was deeply moved by your love and generosity. Unfortunately, Kit and I have canceled the wedding and we are returning all gifts. As you can imagine, I will never forget your thoughtfulness and I will always think of you whenever I see Waterford crystal.

Christina Hossett and Albert Edward Preemby were married June 18, 2002, at Wells First Christian Church. The Reverend Wilfred Devizes performed the ceremony. Parents are Mr. and Mrs. H.G. Hossett of Wells and Mr. and Mrs. A.E. Preemby, Sr., of Waynesville. Christina and Albert want to thank all the guests who celebrated with them. Both are employed at Stephens Insurance.

Bernice and I are absolutely delighted with the electric blanket. You must have been poor students yourselves once, living on the third floor of an old brownstone, hoping that perhaps today the heat might make it all the way upstairs. It's a beautiful, thoughtful, practical gift, and we're grateful.

## SAMPLE LETTERS

The honour of your presence  
is requested at the marriage of  
Sybil Anstey Herbert  
to  
Harry Jardine  
on Saturday, the tenth of October



at one o'clock  
Lehmann Methodist Church  
and afterward at  
The New Lehmann Inn

R.S.V.P.  
Sybil Anstey Herbert  
20 Ianthe Court  
Lehmann, OH 45042

Mr. Edmund Roundelay  
regrets that owing to  
the recent death of  
Evelyn Ferguson Roundelay  
the invitations to the marriage  
of their daughter Crystal  
to Maxwell Dunston  
must be recalled.

Dear Lucy and Fred,

Christopher and I are so pleased you will be able to attend our wedding celebration. I'm afraid there's been a misunderstanding, however. You know how much we enjoy Freddy, Elsa, and Charles, but we are not planning on having any children at the reception. I hope you can find a babysitter so you can still come. Thanks for understanding.

Love,

Miss Laetitia Prism  
regrets that she is unable to accept  
the kind invitation of  
Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Fairfax  
to the marriage of their daughter  
Gwendolyn Fairfax  
Saturday, the sixth of June

two thousand and three  
at 7:30 p.m.

Dear Marjorie,

Will and I have finally made the great decision—we're going to be married next August 19! And the really important question is: will you be my attendant? I can't imagine having anyone but you. However, if you can't get away—and what with your job, Richard's new business, and the children's activities, I know it will take some doing—I will certainly understand.

Enclosed is a sketch of the dress you'd wear. I want to pay for it, so don't worry about that. And of course you'll stay at the house, but unfortunately my budget won't run to your airfare. Will that be a problem?

I'll call next week after you've had time to think about this. In the meantime, Will sends his love along with mine.

Mr. and Mrs. Orville Jones

accept with pleasure

the kind invitation of

Belinda Jorricks

and

Charles Stobbs

to their marriage on

Friday, the tenth of May

two thousand and three

at 7:00 p.m.

St. James A.M.E. Zion Church

Reception following

Surtees Country Club

1838 Plains Highway

Christina Allaby and Theobald Pontifex

announce with great pleasure

their marriage on

Saturday, the twenty-third of June  
two thousand and four  
Butler, Maine

Dear Grace and Harold,

Our dear Stella and Stanley Kowalski are being married on Saturday, September 4, at 3:00 p.m. in an informal ceremony at our house.

We'd love to have you celebrate with us, and stay after the ceremony for a small reception. Let me know if you can join us.

Fondly,

Mimi Wynant and Christian Jorgensen  
announce that their marriage  
has been postponed from  
Saturday, the third of June  
until  
Saturday, the sixth of August  
at two o'clock  
St. Anselm's Church  
Webster City  
Reception to follow  
Webster City County Club

See also: ACCEPTANCES, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, BELATED, CONGRATULATIONS, INVITATIONS, REFUSALS, REQUESTS, RESPONSES, THANK YOU.

# Letters of Welcome

*Come in the evening, or come in the morning,  
Come when you're looked for, or come without warning.  
Kisses and welcomes you'll find here before you,  
And the oftener you come here the more I'll adore you.*

—THOMAS OSBORNE DAVIS

Because they're optional, letters of welcome are read with surprise, pleasure, and gratitude. They are a powerful sales tool for businesses, and a charming approach to smoothing and cementing interpersonal relations among neighbors, co-workers, and people with whom we have frequent dealings. For the naturally hospitable among us, they are a way of life and a joy to write.

## Write Letters of Welcome to

- new business contacts/customers/clients
- new businesses in the neighborhood
- new co-workers/employees
- new members of club/organization/temple/church
- new neighbors
- new students/teachers
- potential customers/clients
- prospective in-laws

## How to Say It

- State how happy you are to have the person join your company, store, division, club, family, group, neighborhood.
- Offer to help the person become acquainted with their new surroundings, duties, colleagues, neighbors.
- Tell something positive about the neighborhood, company, or organization the person is joining. If a special event is coming up, mention it to give the person something to look forward to.
- Suggest a possible future meeting, a store visit, an invitation to call you, or at least say that you're looking forward to meeting sometime

soon. Assure the person you'll be glad to answer questions (include your telephone number)

### What Not to Say

- Don't refer to negative aspects of the person's new situation, for example, the mountains of unfinished work left by a predecessor or the roof problems that troubled the previous owner.
- Don't say "Good luck!" It implies that good luck will be needed.
- Avoid a strong selling message when welcoming customers.

### Tips on Writing

- Send your welcome promptly; it is most appreciated when the new kid on the block still feels insecure.
- Find common ground between you or your organization and the person you're welcoming ("I understand you're a gardener—you'll be interested to know that many of us are!").
- The welcome letter is a fitting place to let the newcomer subtly know about any unwritten rules you might have. ("Although there's never time to chat during office hours, I'd like to get to know you better over lunch someday" or "We look forward to seeing you once you're settled in—but do give us a call first.")

### Special Situations

- When welcoming new employees, include detailed terms of employment to avoid later misunderstandings: hours, duties, salary, title, starting date, supervisor. If the newcomer receives packets of information—building regulations, benefits, contact numbers—include a letter of welcome as the first sheet in the packet. A brief handwritten note from a superior, sent separately, is a powerful way to inspire loyalty and enthusiasm.
- In late August, some elementary school teachers send postcards to welcome incoming students and to help them feel positive about returning to school. Mention a project that the class will enjoy or say, "I think we're going to have a great year." As this requires money for stamps and stationery, access to class lists, time, and energy, the parents of a child who isn't looking forward to the new school year might offer to help the teacher with welcome notes.
- When welcoming a new business or new family to your market area, establish name-recognition and product-association in their minds. Offer a free service or product to introduce the potential customer to your goods and services and to encourage a visit to your office

or store. Enclose a coupon for a small gift or a discount. A relatively inexpensive but useful gift to newcomers is information, for example, a card with phone numbers of area services, hospitals, day-care centers, schools, or hotlines. In a welcome letter, the sales message is more effective when it is unobtrusive and undemanding. A personal letter of welcome to potential customers over the manager's or president's signature will be more cost-effective than mass-produced flyers stuck between a door.

- After a customer or client visits your place of business, follow up with a letter of welcome. If you have not done so earlier, you might now offer some sort of discount or coupon to encourage the customer to return a second time—the possible beginnings of a habit.

- To invite prospective customers to an open house or to visit your new store or offices at their convenience, see INVITATIONS.

## Format

- Letters to new neighbors, prospective in-laws, and new students or teachers are handwritten on foldovers or personal stationery.

- Welcome letters that carry a sales message and letters to new employees, colleagues, and organization members are typed on letterhead or business-personal stationery.

- Postcards are often used to welcome new customers with a special offer or discount.

## WORDS

community	congregation	delighted	excited
future	greetings	hope	hospitality
introduce	invite	meet	neighborhood
organization	pleased	questions	reception
together	visit		

## PHRASES

bid a cordial welcome	delighted to make your acquaintance
eager to serve you	expect long and fruitful years of association
extend a welcome	family circle
good place to pitch your tent	help you get established

look forward to meeting/seeing you	look us up
make yourself at home	open arms/door/house
pleasure to welcome you	so happy you can join
take great pleasure in	to help you get acquainted
warm reception waiting	welcome aboard/back
welcome mat	

## SENTENCES

I look forward to a mutually satisfying business relationship.

I'm pleased to welcome you to the Board of Directors of the Margaret Peel Museum.

It is with the greatest pleasure that I welcome you to Paragon Photo Processing.

Let us know how we can help you feel quickly at home.

The door is always open to you.

The Packles & Son Theatrical Agency is pleased to welcome you to our select family of talented clients.

To introduce you to the faculty, there will be a welcome reception Thursday, September 8.

We believe you will enjoy meeting this challenge with us.

We hope you'll enjoy this area and the great neighbors as much as we have.

Welcome to the team!

We welcome you to Daphnis Wool and Textiles and look forward to a long, productive, and satisfying collaboration.

You've made a wonderful choice (in my opinion)!

## PARAGRAPHS

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Rivermouth Centipedes. The enclosed preapproved membership card entitles you to all benefits and privileges of club membership.

We officially welcome Ottila Gottscheim as Director of Education on Friday, August 7 at 6:30 p.m. Please join us for services and an Oneg Shabbat in her honor.

Welcome to *SportsStory*, the best sports fiction published today! You will receive your first issue shortly. Don't forget to vote for your favorite story every month on our Internet site.

Nothing pleases us more than to be able to say "welcome back" when

an inactive account is revived. We appreciate your return to our list of active accounts and look forward to serving you again.

Welcome to Plattsville! All of us here at The Tarkington Gift and Card Shop hope that you soon feel at home in your new surroundings and that you find much to enjoy and appreciate in Plattsville. To help acquaint you with your new town, we have put together a packet of information in conjunction with the chamber of commerce that we hope you will find helpful. Also enclosed is a coupon for 25% off your first purchase with us.

Welcome to Clyde Episcopal Church. I hope you felt “at home” with us at your first service last Sunday. On February 16 at 7:00 p.m. we are having a welcome party for new parishioners in the church hall. Newcomers have found it helpful to meet some of their neighbors and to hear about the programs we offer. We hope that the whole family will be able to come.

Thank you for your first purchase at Eyvind Hardware, and welcome to our store! We are more than “just a hardware store.” You can ask any of us for advice and information on a wide range of topics—whether it’s the most appropriate floor finish for your home, the differences between grades of sandpaper and steel wool, how to use our rental products, or the advantages and disadvantages of various grout cleaners. Bring us all your home maintenance questions. To show our appreciation for your business, we are enclosing a coupon good for a free pair of gardening gloves. Visit us again soon!

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Ms. Spenser-Smith:

It is with the greatest pleasure that we welcome you to the E.H. Young Literary Society. Enclosed please find: a list of members, a copy of our by-laws, a schedule of this year’s meetings, minutes from the last meeting, and an annotated bibliography of the books we’ll be reading this year.

Your mentor—to make your introduction into the Society as pleasant as possible—will be Ms. Hannah Mole. If you have any questions, please feel free to direct them to her or to me.

I am looking forward to visiting with you after the next meeting.

Sincerely yours,

Dear Mr. Jellyband:

The Dover Business Association welcomes you to one of the busiest and most successful retail areas on the south coast. Those of us who own or manage businesses here have been working together for the past eleven years to bring new business in and to promote the area. Enclosed is a description of the group’s purpose and activities.



As the new owner of The Fisherman's Rest, you are cordially invited to join the Association. The next meeting will be held June 15 at The Crown and Feather. We hope you will enjoy doing business in Dover as much as we have.

Feel free to contact any of the listed members for information or assistance.

Sincerely,

Dear Dr. and Mrs. Townshend-Mahony,

Welcome to Buddlecombe! We're having a neighborhood barbecue/potluck dinner on August 3 at our place, and we would love to have you come. Most of the neighbors will be there, and we think you'll enjoy meeting them. If you'd like to bring something, a cold salad would be perfect.

Yours truly,

Dear Mr. Harness,

I am pleased to tell you that your six-month review shows that your work is more than satisfactory, your sales record is exceptional, and your relationships with managers, co-workers, and customers are all very cordial and productive. As of today, you are being upgraded from temporary to permanent employee status. Welcome to Trengartha Tin Plate Works.

With best wishes,

Dear Godfrey,

Nancy just told us the good news, and we are both happy that she has chosen to spend the rest of her life with you, and you with her. We were not entirely surprised, as we've been hearing about you quite a bit lately! You already feel like part of the family, and we're looking forward to seeing you both at the end of the month. Welcome to the family!

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Webb,

Welcome to Groves Corners. We sincerely hope you'll enjoy living in this friendly community. We at Thornton Furniture offer you a special welcome and invite you to come in and say hello to our friendly, courteous salespeople who are eager to serve you. To make your shopping even more convenient and enjoyable, we are pleased to extend credit privileges to you. Just fill out an application form the next time you are in the store.

We are always happy to answer questions, help you find what you need, or place special orders. Don't hesitate to ask. We pride ourselves on satisfying our customers!

Yours truly,

See also: EMPLOYMENT, GOODWILL, NEIGHBORS, SALES.

## APPENDIX I

# Mechanics

*It was very pleasant to me to get a letter from you the other day. Perhaps I should have found it pleasanter if I had been able to decipher it. I don't think that I mastered anything beyond the date (which I knew) and the signature (which I guessed at). There's a singular and a perpetual charm in a letter of yours; it never grows old, it never loses its novelty.*

—THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

Appendix I covers the concrete aspects of letterwriting, for example, types of stationery, letter formats, envelope addresses, and postal regulations. For assistance with the content of your message (tone, style, language, grammar), see APPENDIX II.

## STATIONERY

### *Business stationery*

Traditionally, business stationery size is 8 1/2" x 11"—for the practical reason that odd-sized stationery is difficult to file. White, off-white, cream, light gray, or other neutral shades are acceptable colors.

Twenty-pound rag bond paper is a popular choice for business stationery; for higher quality, go to a thirty-pound paper. Textures and finishes—flat, matte, smooth, woven, linen-look, watermarked—are a matter of personal taste; all are acceptable. Many businesses use recyclable paper, which is good for public relations as well as for the environment.

All business organizations and many individuals use a letterhead on their stationery, which includes the name of the firm (or the individual's name); address including zipcode (ZIP + 4); area code and telephone number; optionally, fax number, e-mail address, website address, and telex number. The letterhead can also include a logo, an employee's name and title, a list of board of directors or other governing bodies (if lengthy, this list is arranged along the left edge of the page). A good letterhead is readable, informative, attractive, and not too insistent. Printers can show you many formats, inks, styles of type, papers, and engraving and printing methods. The most formal and conservative choice is black ink on white or off-white high-quality paper.

Second sheets are of the same quality as the letterhead paper. They are either plain or are printed or engraved with the company's name. The print is smaller than on letterhead and the address isn't included.

Envelopes match your stationery in color, weight, general style, and letterhead. Your return address always goes in the upper left corner of the front of the envelope. "The return address. Don't let your letters leave home without it." (Steve Sikora) The United States Postal Service (USPS) discourages return addresses on the back flap because sorting machines can't flip envelopes over to check for a return address.

### *Personal-business stationery*

The size referred to as personal-business or executive stationery is 7" or 7 1/2" x 10". Choose white, off-white, neutral, or pale shades of good-quality bond paper. The letterhead includes: the company name and address with the person's name, or name and title, set underneath or off to one side.

Although its use is declining, personal-business stationery is convenient for brief notes; when writing to someone as individual-to-individual rather than as company representative to employee or customer; when the information is casual; or for matters that cross over into the social or personal arena (congratulating a colleague on an award, for example).

### *Memos*

Memos include anything from 8 1/2" x 11" stationery to small pads of printed memo sheets. In white, off-white, neutral, or pastel colors, memo stationery matches the firm's regular business stationery but has only the company name at the top. Memos sent outside the company are printed with the company name, address, telephone and fax numbers. Some memo paper is labeled "Internal Correspondence" and at the top has "TO: FROM: DATE: SUBJECT:" with a space after each.

### *Personal stationery*

You may need 8 1/2" x 11" paper for some personal uses (complaints, household business matters), but personal stationery is generally 7-8" x 10 1/2" or 5 1/2" x 6 1/2-7 1/2" and has matching envelopes.

Formal stationery (for handwritten invitations, condolences, thank yous) is white, off-white, cream, eggshell, straw, beige, gray, or other neutral color with a self border, contrasting border, or no border. For informal use, almost anything is acceptable, with the exception perhaps of stationery that's perfumed, decorated with tiny objects, ruled, oddly shaped, or otherwise says too loudly, "Look at me!" On the other hand, nobody appears to have ever returned a letter because the stationery had too much personality.

If you use a letterhead, monograms, or other printing on your personal stationery, your second sheets have no printing but are the same color and quality as your first sheets.

One-page notecards and foldovers (at least 3 1/2" x 5" when folded) are of a heavier weight paper than stationery and are popular for thank-you notes, handwritten invitations, replies to invitations, condolences, and other formal and informal messages. They usually come with matching envelopes and may be engraved or printed. If your name, address, initials, or other printing appear on the front panel, write on the inside—beginning at the top of the two panels for a long letter or using the bottom panel for a short note. Otherwise, begin your note on the front panel. The Postal Service discourages printing or engraving your return address on the envelope's flap. Letter-Sorting Machines (LSMs) cannot flip a letter to check the other side when it fails to find the return address on the front.

## ENVELOPES

### *Business*

The Postal Service says that for the best service you should use the optical-character-reader (OCR) format for your envelopes, a machine-readable style for rapid sorting. Type or machine-print all address information in capital letters, using black ink on white paper and sharp, clear print with no overlapping or touching letters. Problem fonts include extended fonts, italic fonts, condensed fonts, bold fonts, and stylized script-like fonts. Do not underline address information as that will interfere with character recognition. Scanners can read a combination of uppercase and lowercase characters but prefer all uppercase. Addresses appear flush left style, that is, the first letter of each line in the address should be directly under the first letter of the line above. Include as much address information as possible: apartment, floor, suite number, zipcode or ZIP + 4. Omit all punctuation (except the hyphen in the ZIP + 4). Use abbreviations preferred by the Postal Service (see list at the end of this Appendix). Leave at least one space between words and two spaces between word groups. Two spaces are preferred between city and state, and two spaces between state and zipcode (with no punctuation). Leave the bar code area free of any writing. Allow at least 1/2" on either side of the address and 5/8" from bottom of address to bottom of envelope. Every address must have a minimum of three lines and a maximum of five lines. If you have an attention line ("ATTN: Tom Bowling"), it goes on the second line (under the company name). If the address contains both a post office box and a street address, it will be delivered to whichever appears directly above the city and state. Hand-stamp or type mailing

directions (“Airmail,” “Third Class,” “Special Delivery”) under the area where the postage will go.

### *Personal*

For all formal and many informal personal letters, handwrite your return address (upper left corner) as well as the addressee’s (lower right). For less formal personal correspondence the envelope may be typed (single-spaced). Although formal personal stationery is sometimes engraved or printed with the person’s name and address on the back flap, the Postal Service prefers the return address on the front. For the other person’s address, use either block style (each line’s left edge lines up with the others) or indented style (each successive line is indented one or two spaces). Formal correspondence traditionally does not use abbreviations for “Street,” “Avenue,” “Parkway,” “Road,” or state names. However, the Postal Service requests that, for optimum sorting and delivery, the address be printed all in capital letters, with no punctuation except the hyphen in the ZIP + 4, using approved two-letter state abbreviations. The European “7” is not recommended because of the possibility of its being confused by the scanner with f, h, p, or t. USPS guidelines differ from traditional addressing of personal correspondence. When Judith Martin (“Miss Manners”) was asked if we must forgo etiquette rules on envelopes, she recommended following the USPS rules to ensure delivery, but suggested that the double envelope system (used for wedding invitations) can permit the writer to send a personal letter that is both prettily addressed and properly delivered.

### *ZIP codes*

All letters need correct zipcodes to be delivered. When you know it, use the ZIP + 4 number; it indicates local routes and can speed your letter significantly. Use your ZIP + 4 on outgoing correspondence so that people use it when writing you. You can buy a national zipcode directory from your local post office, or look up zipcodes in the directory at the post office. For in-town mail, check your local phone book, which often lists zipcodes by street names.

The Postal Service prefers that there not be less than one full character space and not more than five full character spaces between city, state, and zipcode; it prefers two spaces between city and state, and two spaces between state and zipcode.

Note that there should be no information on the envelope below the zipcode line. This area is reserved for bar coding.

### *Folding and inserting*

When inserting a sheet of 8½” x 11” paper into a # 10 envelope, fold

it in horizontal thirds, and insert it with the back of the top third facing the flap so that the recipient pulls out the letter, flips up that third, and is ready to begin reading. When using window envelopes, letters need to be folded so that the name and address appear in the window.

When inserting a full-size sheet into an envelope smaller than a number ten, fold it in half horizontally and then again in thirds and insert it so that the open end is on the left and the top fold faces the flap. The recipient pulls it out, rotates it a quarter turn to the right, opens it, and is ready to read.

Personal stationery is folded once with the writing inside and inserted into its matching envelope, open edges down. The recipient removes the letter and flips up the top half to read.

When folding any size sheet of paper, the top and bottom edges are not perfectly even with each other (although the sides are). It is easier to unfold a sheet of paper if one end extends just slightly beyond the other.

No matter what stationery you're using, the salutation (which will be inside the folds) faces the flap of the envelope.

## *Enclosures*

Flat enclosures (checks, folded flyers, business cards) are placed inside the folds of the letter. To safeguard against your reader overlooking them, add an enclosure line to your letter ("Enc.: subscription blank"). For larger enclosures, use an appropriately sized manila envelope (many businesses have their own imprinted larger envelopes). When a package contains a letter, the entire package must go first class. When there is no urgency about bulky or heavy enclosures, send them third class and advise your correspondent by first-class mail of the package being sent under separate cover.

## WRITING, TYPING, PRINTING

### *Handwritten*

Black or blue ink is preferred to other colors, and pencil is never used. Certain notes are almost always written by hand: thank-you notes, messages of sympathy, replies to invitations, invitations that are not engraved or printed. Write by hand to convey personal feeling or informality or, in the case of an interoffice memo, when you have a one-or two-line message.

### *Typewritten or computer-generated*

Business correspondence is being word processed in almost all companies.

## *Engraved or printed*

Acknowledgments, announcements, invitations, and response cards are commonly engraved or printed (engraving is more expensive). Printers can explain the differences between the types of engraving and printing, show you dozens of samples, and offer you a wide variety of papers, formats, type styles, and inks as well as advice on how to word your message.

## ELEMENTS OF A LETTER

### *Personal letters*

**Date:** The date is placed near the top of the right side of the page. When the person is unfamiliar with your address and you aren't using stationery with your address on it, start with your address in the upper right corner (usually two lines) followed by the date. The left edges of these three lines line up underneath each other.

**Salutation:** Begin the salutation a few spaces down and flush left. It is followed by a comma ("Dear Jean,"). You don't usually put the person's address above it, as you would with a business letter.

**Body of the letter:** Indent the first paragraph—five spaces if you are typing the letter, about 3/4" if you are handwriting it. Indent all other paragraphs the same way.

**Closing:** The complimentary close ("Love," "Sincerely,") is set about one line below your last sentence and to the right, its left edge on a line with the left edge of your date. Sign your name on the line below the complimentary close.

If your letter is more than one page long, generally write only on one side of your stationery.

### *Memos*

**Headings:** At the top of the memo are the headings, the to/from/date/subject lines, which replace the letter's salutation. The most common ways of arranging the headings on the page are:

TO: Paul Rayley

TO: Rowena Ravenstock

FROM: Minta Doyle

FROM: Max Tryte

DATE: April 23, 2002

DATE: November 1, 2001



RE: Lighthouse repairs  
SUBJECT: Gouache supplies

TO: Martin Fenner  
DATE: July 14, 2003  
FROM: Owen Kettle  
SUBJECT: Series on tuberculosis

**Message or body of the memo:** There are no rigid rules for spacing in a memo, but two or three blank lines are commonly left between the headings and the text, which is single-spaced. Each paragraph begins flush left and is separated from other paragraphs by a single line of space.

**Notation lines:** Notations such as "Enc.:" or "cc:" are placed flush left at the bottom, as in a letter.

No signature is necessary on a memo, but people often sign or initial it at the bottom or next to their name in the "From:" line. Some memos are arranged in two parts so that the recipient can respond on and return the second half.

### ***Business letters***

**Return address:** If you aren't using letterhead stationery, use the two lines immediately preceding the date line for your street address, city, state, and zipcode. Unless the letter is extremely formal, abbreviations ("Rd.," "Apt.," "NY") are acceptable.

**Date:** For dates use this format: "October 12, 2002." The month is not abbreviated, the day is not spelled out, and endings for numbers ("16th," "2nd") are not used. You may see "12 October 2002," particularly for international or government business. If you are typing in your return address, the date line goes directly beneath it. Otherwise, it is placed two to six lines below the printed address. When using the shortened date form ("10/12/2002") in a casual memo, remember that this is used primarily in the United States; in other countries the first number is the day, the second the month.

**Confidential or personal notation:** Indicate "Confidential" or "Personal" halfway between the date line and the inside address, flush left.

**Inside address:** The number of spaces between the date line and the inside address depends on the length of your letter. Balance the elements of the letter so that there's not too much white space above the inside address or below the last printed line. The inside address is always flush left and single spaced. If one line is long, put half of it on the next line, indenting two or three spaces. The person's name goes on the first line. A brief title follows the name, preceded by a comma. Otherwise the title goes on the second line or, if you need the space, can be omitted. When

writing to two or more people, list them one to a line in alphabetical order. The company's name is on the next line, and the department or division is on the following line (unless space is a problem, in which case omit it). Information such as suite, room, floor, or apartment usually has its own line, unless it and the street address are short enough to fit on one line. It used to be standard practice to spell out all words of the inside address, but the use of two-letter state abbreviations has spread from the envelopes (where the Postal Service wants to see them) to the inside address, and if the letter is not formal, other abbreviations ("Ave.") may appear as well. Spell out compass directions that precede a street name but abbreviate those that follow it ("14 North Cedar," "14 Cedar N.W.").

**Attention line:** When you don't know the name of the individual to whom you are writing or you want to direct the letter to a particular person's attention, the attention line ("ATTN: Customer Service Representative") is placed below the inside address, leaving one line of space between them. You can also include an attention line as part of the inside address on either the first or second line (after the company name).

**Subject line:** To indicate the subject of your letter, type "Subject:" or "Re:" (for "regarding") between the salutation and the body of your letter or between the inside address and the salutation. A brief phrase follows it ("Subject: block and brick work" or "Re: vacation dates"). Many people replace the salutation with a subject line when writing an impersonal letter to an anonymous recipient (your credit card statement was incorrect, for example). The subject line is popular with people handling stacks of incoming letters, trying to quickly identify the purpose of each. It is not recommended when your letter deals with several subjects.

**Reference line:** When referring to an order number or to a reference number used either by your correspondent or by your firm, handle it like a subject line and place it between the inside address and the salutation or between the salutation and the body of the letter (leaving one line of space on both sides in each case). It may also be placed between the date line and the inside address.

**Salutation:** Leave one line of space between the inside address (or the subject line) and the salutation. The salutation is followed by a colon (which is more formal) or a comma.

**Body of the letter:** Leave one line of space between the salutation (or the subject line) and the body of the letter. In general, single space within paragraphs and leave a line of space between paragraphs. If your letter is brief, however, double-spacing (or even 1 1/2 spacing) will make it look better on the page. Wide margins will also balance brief letters on the page just as narrow margins (but not less than 11/4") modify long letters. To indent paragraphs, start in five to ten spaces.

Do not justify the right margin.

If your letter runs to a second page, indicate the name of the recipient, the page number, and the date across the top of the page (about six lines

below the paper's edge). When writing to two individuals, put both names on the left, one under the other, and on the right indicate the date with the page number under it. Then leave three to five lines before resuming the body of the text. There should be a minimum of three lines of type in addition to the signature block to justify a second page.

**Complimentary close:** Leave one line between the body of the text and the complimentary close ("Yours truly").

**Signature:** Your handwritten signature goes between the complimentary close and your typed name and title.

**Name and title lines:** Four spaces (or more, if your signature is large) below the complimentary close, type your name with the first letter directly beneath the first letter of the complimentary close. If you use a title, it is typed on the line beneath your name, and also lined up with the left edge of your name and the complimentary close. Omit the title if it appears on the letterhead.

**Identification line:** Leave one line of space between the name or title line and the identification line. Type the letter-signer's initials in capital letters flush left, followed by a slash or colon and the typist's initials in lowercase letters ("DCK/jp," "IN: pjm"). Or, since it is obvious who has signed the letter, the typist's initials appear alone. The identification line is no longer much used.

**Enclosure line:** Leave one line of space between the identification line or the name/title line and the enclosure line. Set flush left, this line begins with "Enc.:" and lists any enclosures in the order in which they are found in the envelope, one to a line. You may also use "Encl." or "Enclosures" followed by the number of items enclosed: "Enclosures (4)".

**Copies line:** Leave one line of space between previous material and the copy line. After "cc:" (from the old "carbon copy") list those receiving copies of the letter in alphabetical order, one to a line, either by their full name, initials and last name, or title and last name only. The person's address may also be included. If you don't want the recipient of the letter to know that copies were sent, indicate "bcc:" (blind carbon copy) with the names of those receiving copies on the office copy of the letter.

**Postscript:** A postscript, preceded by "P.S.," is typed flush left two spaces below the last typed line.

**Mailing notation:** Instructions for mailing (Special Delivery, Overnight Express) are noted on copies of the letter, but not on the original. This is rarely used today.

## LETTER FORMATS

There is no "best" way to arrange the elements of a letter on the page (unless your company has a house style). You do, however, need to be consistent (if you indent one paragraph, you indent them all) and the layout must be readable and appealing. The following four

formats are the most common, but any arrangement is acceptable if it makes sense, is readable, and is spaced nicely on the page.

### *Full-block letter*

The easiest format for the typist, full block-style means that every line begins at the left margin—no exceptions. If you have a second page, the name of the recipient, the page number, and the date are typed flush left, one under the other.

## **CHANNING FURNITURE RENTAL**

1927 James Avenue  
Huntly, WI 53597

March 15, 2002

Confidential

Yorke Furniture Rental  
ATTN: Constance Yorke  
1862 Wood Street  
Huntly, WI 53597

Dear Constance Yorke:

Re: bad checks

We spoke at the Huntly Business Association meeting last month about exchanging lists of customers who have written at least three unbankable checks. Enclosed is my list.

Yours truly,

[signature]

Hamish Channing  
President

Enc.: list

P.S. I don't feel too bad about passing these names along because I keep this same list posted by my cash register.

## ***Block letter***

The block letter is identical to the full-block with two exceptions: the date line and reference line are typed flush right and the signature block (complimentary close plus signature plus name line and title line) are also set flush right or at least to the right of center. Otherwise, everything is flush left and there are no indentations. This format, which has a more traditional look than the full-block format, is used in the majority of business letters.

## **CHANNING FURNITURE RENTAL**

1927 James Avenue  
Huntly, WI 53597

March 15, 2002

CONFIDENTIAL

Yorke Furniture Rental  
ATTN: Constance Yorke  
1862 Wood Street  
Huntly, WI 53597

Dear Constance Yorke:

Re: bad checks

We spoke at the Huntly Business Association meeting last month about exchanging lists of customers who have written at least three unbankable checks. Enclosed is my list.

Yours truly,

[signature]

Hamish Channing  
President

Enc.: list

P.S. I don't feel too bad about passing these along because I keep this same list posted by my cash register.

### *Modified-block*

Also known as the semi-block, this format is identical to the block format with one exception: it has indentations. All paragraphs are indented five to ten spaces. The subject line may also be indented. As in the block style, the date line, the reference line, and the signature block are all set flush right or at least to the right of center. This format, which appears a little warmer than the block formats, is probably the second most popular business letter format.

## CHANNING FURNITURE RENTAL

1927 James Avenue  
Huntly, WI 53597

March 15, 2002

CONFIDENTIAL

Yorke Furniture Rental  
ATTN: Constance Yorke  
1862 Wood Street  
Huntly, WI 53597

Dear Constance Yorke:

Re: bad checks

We spoke at the Huntly Business Association meeting last month about exchanging lists of customers who have written at least three unbankable checks.

Enclosed is my list. I'll look forward to receiving yours when you have time to send it along.

Yours truly,

[signature]

Hamish Channing

President

Enc.: list

P.S. I don't feel too bad about passing these along because I keep this same list posted by my cash register.

### *Simplified*

With its streamlined contemporary look, the simplified format is easily identified by its lack of salutation and complimentary close. Like the full-block style, all lines begin at the left margin. But it has a subject line (typed in capital letters) instead of a salutation. The letter-writer's name and title are typed in all capital letters.

CHANNING FURNITURE RENTAL

1927 James Avenue

Huntly, WI 53597

March 15, 2002

CONFIDENTIAL

Yorke Furniture Rental

1862 Wood Street

Huntly, WI 53597

RE: BAD CHECKS

As decided at the Huntly Business Association meeting last month, I am forwarding to other stores a list of my customers who have given me at least three unbankable checks.

Enclosed is my list. I'll look forward to receiving yours.

[signature]

HAMISH CHANNING

PRESIDENT

Enc.: list

## UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE GUIDELINES

The United States Postal Service (USPS) offers services and publications useful to anyone who uses the U.S. mail. The free monthly “Memo to Mailers” for business mailers can be obtained by writing:

National Customer Support Center  
 United States Postal Service  
 6060 Primacy Pkwy Ste 101  
 Memphis, TN 38188-0001

Other services and publications include online or by-mail sale of postage stamps, automated telephone information on postal services, zipcode directories, brochures and videos on topics from a history of mailing and requirements for second-class mail to how to wrap packages and address envelopes. Check your phone book for a number to call to request publications, call the nearest USPS Business Center, ask at the post office, or look online (<http://www.usps.gov>).

Suggestions from the Postal Service on improving your mail handling include:

- Make sure your mail is readable by the Optical Character Readers (OCRs) used in automated sorting: use envelopes of standard size and shape (first-class mail must be rectangular—a square envelope, for example, will be assessed a surcharge); use only white, ivory, or pastels; avoid unusual features like odd papers or bright graphics; type the address IN CAPITAL LETTERS with no punctuation (except for the hyphen in ZIP + 4 codes), with one or two spaces between words, and with nothing but the address in the lower right part of the envelope.
- Don’t use paperclips; they often jam the Letter-Sorting Machines (LSMs).
- Put your return address on envelopes; many people fail to do this.
- Use the two-letter state abbreviations and ZIP + 4.
- Set up a home postal center: obtain copies of USPS brochures listing postage rates, fees, and information; invest in a small postage scale; buy stamps of different denominations to keep in small nine- or fifteen-drawer organizers.
- Attend USPS workshops on such subjects as marketing with direct mail, professional mailroom management, and organizing mail for optimum service. The seminars are designed to help cut costs and improve efficiency by trying to match USPS programs to your company’s needs. There is usually a small registration fee.
- Subscribe to *Domestic Mail Manual* and *International Mail Manual*. They may be too expensive (and unnecessary) for individual letterwriters, but many businesses find them indispensable.



- Use the Business Reply Mail Accounting System (BRMAS), which is available to customers who use Business Reply Mail.
- Bar code your mail. Using ZIP + 4 and bar codes gives you the largest postal discount available, and the bar coding equipment eventually pays for itself. If you are interested in bar coding your mail, contact an account representative at your local USPS Marketing and Communications office.
- Keep current with new publications, programs, rates, and services; the USPS constantly updates old services and introduces new ones.

## ENVELOPE ABBREVIATIONS

Alabama	AL	Louisiana	LA
Alaska	AK	Maine	ME
American Samoa	AS	Marshall Islands	MH
Arizona	AZ	Maryland	MD
Arkansas	AR	Massachusetts	MA
California	CA	Michigan	MI
Colorado	CO	Minnesota	MN
Connecticut	CT	Mississippi	MS
Delaware	DE	Missouri	MO
District of Columbia	DC	Montana	MT
Federated States of		Nebraska	NE
Micronesia	FM	Nevada	NV
Florida	FL	New Hampshire	NH
Georgia	GA	New Jersey	NJ
Guam	GU	New Mexico	NM
Hawaii	HI	New York	NY
Idaho	ID	North Carolina	NC
Illinois	IL	North Dakota	ND
Indiana	IN	Northern Mariana Islands	MP
Iowa	IA	Ohio	OH
Kansas	KS	Oklahoma	OK

Kentucky	KY	Oregon	OR
Palau	PW	Utah	UT
Pennsylvania	PA	Vermont	VT
Puerto Rico	PR	Virginia	VA
Rhode Island	RI	Virgin Islands	VI
South Carolina	SC	Washington	WA
South Dakota	SD	West Virginia	WV
Tennessee	TN	Wisconsin	WI
Texas	TX	Wyoming	WY

Apartment	APT
Attention	ATTN
Building	BLDG
Center	CTR
Company	CO
Corporation	CORP
Department	DEPT
Division	DIV
Floor	FLR
Government	GOVT
Headquarters	HDQTRS
Hospital	HOSP
Institute	INST
National	NATL
Parkway	PKWY
Post Office Box	PO BOX
Room	RM
Rural Route	RR
Suite	STE

## APPENDIX II

# Content

*I once read a survey that said the moment in the daily routine that people look forward to most is opening the mail.*

—NANCY BERLINER

Appendix I tells *how* to put a letter on the page (and what kind of a page to put it on). Appendix II tells *what* to put on the page, discussing principles of good letterwriting and effective form letters; grammar and usage; respectful, unbiased language; names and titles; salutations, complimentary closes, and signatures; frequently misspelled words; superfluous words and phrases.

### GENERAL GUIDELINES ON LETTER CONTENT

These guidelines apply primarily to business letters. For example, brevity is highly prized in a business letter, but it may not be appreciated by a dear friend. You aren't obliged to state your main idea (if indeed you have one) in the first sentence of a letter to a family member, whereas the business reader wants to know immediately what your letter is about. However, these suggestions will improve all your letterwriting.

- Before beginning to write, identify the purpose of your letter (to get a refund, to set up a meeting, to issue an invitation). Gather necessary information. Think about your reader—the more you know about the recipient of your letter, the more precisely you can tailor your message.
- State the main idea in the first or second sentence.
- Be brief. George Burns's advice on a good sermon applies equally well to letters: "a good beginning and a good ending...as close together as possible." Give brief explanations, instructions, reasons.
- Be specific. Nothing gives writing more power than details—not unnecessary details, but details that replace vague words and phrases. Readers want to know how much, what color, what date, what time, how big, how little. Re-read your letter and question every adjective—is it pulling its weight? Could it be more specific?
- Be pleasant, courteous, positive, and encouraging. For being so inexpensive, upbeat attitudes are startlingly effective.

- Be factual and avoid emotion in business letters. (It is fine—even desirable—in personal letters.) Your readers do not really care about your feelings; they want facts, they want to know outcomes, they want results, they want reasons. Don't exaggerate, or your message will lose credibility with your reader. It's better to mildly understate your case and let the reader take credit for seeing how wonderful it really is.
- Use (but don't overuse) the word "you" throughout your letter, and particularly in the opening sentences. The most important letterwriting rule is "Keep your reader in mind." Phrase your message in terms of your reader's interests, needs, and expectations. The "you" involves the reader in the letter. The exception to the use of "you" is the letter of complaint or disagreement, in which "you"-statements are perceived as (and often are) accusing and hostile. Phrase your message in terms of "I" statements.
- Use the active instead of the passive voice ("I received your letter last week," not "Your letter was received last week"). Use strong, direct, action-filled verbs ("is/are," "do," and "make" are not some of them). Use a thesaurus to find dynamic (but not unusual, unfamiliar, or unpronounceable) substitutes for your most overused words.
- Use a lively, conversational tone. Reading your letters out loud for several weeks will help you spot awkwardnesses.
- Choose a tone for your letter and stick to it. A letter might be formal or informal, cool or warm, serious or light-hearted, brisk or relaxed, simple or complex, elegant or down home. But it is, above all, consistent.
- Avoid overused words like "very" and "basically." Basically, neither of them means very much, and they become annoying to the reader.
- Avoid slang, jargon, clichés, buzz words, legalese, elitist language, and stilted usage like "I shall." Choose the familiar word over the unfamiliar.
- When writing abroad, keep sentences and syntax simple. Avoid slang, jargon, figures of speech, references to facets of American culture, the passive voice, and complex verb constructions. Keep to the present and simple past tenses. Instead of "If we had only known...", say "We did not know..." If using numerals for the date, use day/month/year instead of month/day/year. If you know them, use social titles from the reader's own language ("Madame," "Signore," "Herr," "Señora"). Use the address exactly as given; it is most deliverable in that form. Letters from other countries often have ritualized closing sentences that express the writer's respect and good wishes; take your cue from your correspondent's letter and reply in kind.
- Make it easy for your correspondent to reply: enclose a postage-paid reply envelope or a self-addressed stamped envelope.

## FORM LETTERS

Form letters have done away with the numbing and time-consuming chore of typing the same letter thousands of times. They are invaluable in direct sales marketing and in the processing of routine business letters (confirmations, acknowledgments, cover letters, rejections).

Joseph Heller poked fun at form letters in *Catch-22*: “Dear Mrs, Mr, Miss, or Mr and Mrs Daneeka: Words cannot express the deep personal grief I experienced when your husband, son, father or brother was killed, wounded or reported missing in action.”

To avoid this aspect of form letters, direct your message to the individual reading it. Inserting the person’s name at intervals isn’t the way to do this; too many spelling errors can creep in, and people do not in any case mistake this cheery and obviously phony friendship for real intimacy.

Personalize your letter by using “you” and using mailing lists of specific market targets. Then, if you are writing to members of a list who are all gardeners or who have all contributed to a charity within the past six months, you know how to frame your letter. For important mailings, use high-quality paper, sign each letter individually (there are people who look first to see if the signature is “real” or not and then either read the letter or toss it), and mail the letter first class.

## GRAMMAR AND USAGE

Some common grammar and usage issues are outlined below. If you write more than the occasional letter, invest in a mini-library for your desk: dictionary, basic grammar, usage guide, style manual, thesaurus.

- Use **periods** at the end of sentences. Or sentence fragments. A period also follows an abbrev. Ellipsis points are used to replace missing words: three dots in the middle of the sentence, four at the end.

- **Commas** separate items or lists of things. It is correct either to use or not to use a comma before “and” in a series (“Milk, butter and eggs” or “Milk, butter, and eggs”)—the only rule is to do it one way or the other consistently. If you don’t know when to use a comma, read the sentence aloud dramatically. The place where you pause to group a thought phrase together may need a comma. Commas are used before and after “etc.,” years of a date (“On May 27, 1678, the sun rose...”), and academic degrees.

- Don’t use **question marks** after indirect questions or requests (“He asked what went wrong” or “Please sweep up here after yourself”). Omit the comma after the question mark in cases like “Do you like it?” she asked.

- Except perhaps for sales letters, business correspondence doesn't need—and shouldn't have—**exclamation marks**. Be stingy with them in personal correspondence as well. J.L. Basford believed that “One who uses many periods is a philosopher; many interrogations, a student; many exclamations, a fanatic.” Exclamations give your letters a certain manic look, like people laughing at their own jokes. At first, it will tear at your heart to remove them; by and by, you will be pleased to find that you can get along nicely without them.

- **Quotation marks** are used for quoted words and for the titles of magazine articles and TV and radio shows. All punctuation goes inside the quotation marks (“What?” “Egads!” “I won’t,” he said). Common sense ought to indicate the rare exceptions. If the punctuation in no way belongs to the quotation, you can leave it outside, as in the following sentence: How many times have you heard a child say “But I’m not tired”?

- **Parentheses** are used to enclose asides to your main train of thought. When the aside is an incomplete thought (incomplete sentence) it is placed in the middle of a regular sentence; the first word inside does not begin with a capital, nor is there any punctuation. (Sometimes, however, your thought is a complete thought, or complete sentence, in which case it is set inside parentheses and has its own initial capital letter and final punctuation.) When using parentheses within a sentence, all punctuation goes after the parentheses: Please order more ribbons, paper (30#), and file folders.

- In general, **hyphens** are used to help word pairs or groups form one easy-to-read thought group. Traditional exceptions are words ending in-ly (“newly appointed”) and adjective groups that follow a noun (“well-known telecaster” but “she was well known”). The trend is to one word rather than hyphenated words or two separate words (“headlight,” not “head-light” or “head light”). A quick check with a dictionary will give you the correct form for most words.

- Use **apostrophes** to replace missing letters (“isn’t” = “is not”) and to show possession (“Simon’s”). The apostrophe most commonly shows up in the wrong place in “its” and “it’s.” If you can write “it is” in place of your word, it needs the apostrophe. If you have trouble with this pair, write only “it is” or “its” until you are comfortable with the difference. When more than one person is involved, show the plural possessive by placing the apostrophe after the “s” (“union members’ votes” or “the parents’ recommendations”). Omit the apostrophe when making plurals of number and letter combinations: Ph.D.s, the 1990s, the 2000s, the ‘50s, three 100s, IBMs.

- **Colons** often precede a list or a long quotation (“We carry the following brand names:...” or “The hospital issued the following apology:...”). Do not use a colon when it unnecessarily breaks up a sentence (remove the colon in “Your kit contains: a lifetime supply of

glue, four colors of paint, and a set of two brushes"). The colon is also used after a business or formal salutation ("Mr. President:").

- **Semi-colons** tend to give a stuffy, old-fashioned look to a letter. However, they are still useful on occasion. When writing a long list that has internal punctuation, separate each element with a semi-colon ("New members for January: Rachel and Darke Solomon of Velindre, their children Peter, Jasper, Ruby, and Amber; Constantine Stephanopoulos; Catherine, Lize, and Fritz Steinhart"). You may also separate two independent clauses of a sentence with a semi-colon ("In prosperity our friends know us; in adversity we know our friends."—J. Churton Collins).

- The overuse of **dashes** indicates a rather slapdash (you see where it comes from?) style. If you are a regular dash-user, check to see if other punctuation might not do as well. Dashes tend to mate in captivity, so once the dash habit takes hold, they proliferate on the page, giving a letter a rather forward-leaning, breathless quality.

- A common grammar error involves **noun-verb agreement**. In complicated sentences in which the noun and verb become separated from each other, it's easy to make a mistake. When proofreading your letters, pick out long sentences, find your noun and verb, put them together, and see if they still make sense. Some nouns that look singular ("data") take a plural verb; some that look plural take a singular verb ("a series of books is scheduled for"; "the board of directors is investigating"). What do you do with "None of them has/have voted yet"? When in doubt, re-word the sentence ("Nobody has voted yet"; "Not one of them has voted yet") or ask what the sense of the phrase is. If you are speaking of only one person, use "has"; if the sense of the phrase indicates many people, use "have." "A number of accountants are signing up for..." but "The number of accountants is decreasing."

- **Underline or italicize** titles of books and movies; other titles go in quotation marks.

- One of the best things you can do for your writing is to become aware of **parallel structures**—from little things like capitalizing or not capitalizing all the words in a list to making sure each word in the list is the same part of speech. In long sentences, writers often forget that they started one phrase with "to interview..." but later used "calling the candidate" and ended up with "and, finally, you could meet with..." A parallel form would have "to interview...to call...to meet with..."

- Keep **paragraphs** short. Let each one develop a single idea. Start with your broadest idea and support it with detailed refinements. Or start with details and lead the reader to your final, topic sentence.

- The easiest way to decide whether you need **"that" or "which"** is to see if you need commas. Commas and "which" tend to go together: "The file, which eventually turned up on Frank's desk, had been missing for a week." "The file that had been missing eventually turned

up on Frank's desk." Do not set off a phrase beginning with "that" with commas, but do set off a "which" clause with commas.

- "Howard and Paul had lunch together before he left." Which "he" left? Check pronouns ("who," "she," "they") to be sure the **antecedents** (the persons they refer to) are clear.

- **Dangling modifiers** consist of words tacked onto a sentence, front or back (sometimes even in the middle), in such a way that the reader doesn't know what they modify. In *Watch Your Language*, Theodore M. Bernstein gives several examples, among them: "Although definitely extinct, Professor Daevey said it had not been too long ago that the moa was floundering around his deathtrap swamps." "As reconstructed by the police, Pfeffer at first denied any knowledge of the Byrd murder."

- **"Between"** is generally between two people, no more. (And the correct expression is always "between you and me," "between Flory and me.") **"Among"** is generally for three or more: "We should have the necessary know-how among the four of us."

- Watch the placement of **"only"** and **"not only"**; they should go right next to the word they modify. Instead of "I am only buying one," write "I am buying only one."

- **"Whom"** and **"whomever"** do not occur nearly as often as people suppose. Use them only when you can show they are the object of a verb. The most common misuse of "whomever" occurs in a situation like this: "Please mail this file to whoever is elected secretary." "Whoever" is correct; it is the subject of the clause. If you are troubled by this construction, see a good grammar book; until then, it is perhaps enough to be aware of the problem.

## TALKING ABOUT PEOPLE

Stereotypical language forgets that people are individuals. Exclusive language forgets to include certain people. When you invite customers to an open house and fail to say that the event is accessible, you exclude people with disabilities. When you begin your letter "Dear Sirs:" you forget that women might be reading it. When you refer to the "Judeo-Christian ethic" you exclude large numbers of highly ethical non-Jews and non-Christians. Words can exclude, stereotype, and discriminate against people on the basis of sex, age, ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, and religion.

For information on using respectful people language, see *Talking About People* (Rosalie Maggio, The Oryx Press, 1997). The rationale is that it is good business; you can't sell anything or obtain any information or favors from someone whom you've just excluded or stereotyped. A few guidelines:



- The “people first” rule says we are people first, and only secondarily people who have disabilities, people who are over sixty-five, people who are Baptists, people who are Finnish-Americans. In your letters, decide first if you need to mention classifications such as sex, age, race, religion, economic class, or disability; most often they’re unnecessary. When in doubt, omit them. Don’t identify the whole person by part of the person. Madeline is someone who has paraplegia. Referring to her as “a paraplegic” identifies the whole Madeline by one part of her. People aren’t “confined to a wheelchair”; they use wheelchairs.
- Check for parallel constructions: do you mention one person’s marital status and not the other person’s? One person’s race, and not the other’s? Identify some people as gay but not others as heterosexual? Is she Mrs. William Gostrey, but he is Ray Parker? Or he is Ray Parker and she is Sheila?
- Instead of “man” or “mankind” use words that include everyone, for example, people, we, us, humanity, human beings, individuals, human society, nature, planet earth, the world. Don’t use “he” when you mean “he or she.” Instead of “A mailcarrier has his work cut out for him today” use the plural: “Mailcarriers have their work cut out for them today.” You can also rewrite the sentence to use “you” or “we.” Sometimes “he,” “his,” or “him” can be omitted or replaced with a noun. Avoid the awkward “his or her” or “she or he.” The centuries-old use of singular “they” (“to each their own”), which is found throughout this book, is accepted or endorsed by most language authorities, including *Oxford English Dictionary*; *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed.; *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 3rd ed.; *American Heritage Book of English Usage*; the National Council of Teachers of English; *Random House Dictionary II*; *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary*; Randolph Quirk et al., *A Grammar of Contemporary English*. With a few exceptions (“layperson,” for example), words ending in *-person* are contrived-looking; good alternatives exist for almost all of them. Use *chair* instead of *chairperson*; *chair* is the older and tidier term. We use *head* (“the head of the department”) and *headed* (“she headed the organization”) without fearing a disembodied head; in the same way, no one mistakes the committee chair for what they’re sitting on.

## NAMES

There is only one rule about names: use whatever name your correspondent prefers. Guidelines include:

- Spell your correspondent’s name correctly. It is worth the few minutes and the forty cents to call to obtain the correct spelling and current title of the person to whom you’re writing.

- Although it is acceptable in some fields and in some parts of the country to call people by their first names, write “Dear Mr. Cokeson” rather than “Dear Bob” until you’re sure the latter is welcome. Miss Manners says: “To prevent the unauthorized use of her first name, Miss Manners took the precaution of not having one.” She says she is far from alone in cringing when strangers assume the privileges of intimacy by using her first name. When unsure about the degree of formality between you and a correspondent, choose the more formal approach.

- When ordering business cards or personal calling cards, spell out your full name. Social titles (Mr., Ms., Mrs., Miss) used to precede the name, but they are largely omitted today. Medical specialists use “Dr.” or “Doctor” on social cards (“Doctor Christopher Bembridge”), but use “M.D.,” “D.O.,” “D.D.S.,” “O.D.” on business cards (“Muriel Eden, D.D.S.”). Either “Joseph Farr, Jr.” or “Joseph Farr II” is correct. When using “Esq.” (short for Esquire) after a lawyer’s name (“Marian Beltham, Esq.”), omit all other titles (Mr., Ms., Mrs., Miss) before it.

- For a woman, use the social title (also called courtesy title or honorific) she uses (see her last letter or call her home or office to check on the spelling of her name and to ask “Do you prefer Miss, Mrs., or Ms.?”). If there’s no clue to her marital status (and remember that we’ve been addressing men for years without worrying about this), use her full name without a social title (“Dear Florence Churchill”) or use “Ms.” and her last name. The worst that can happen is that the letter you receive in return is signed by a “Mrs.” or a “Dr.” or some other title. Now you know. In business, women use their own first names. This used to indicate that a woman was single, divorced, or possibly widowed. Today it just means that that is her first name. Socially, some women use their husbands’ names. Some may still sign a letter “Nelly Christie” but type underneath “Mrs. John Christie.” Traditionally, married or widowed women used their husbands’ names (“Mrs. Philip Halliday”), while divorced women used their own first name and either their family-of-origin name, their married name, or both. Single women were to use “Miss” or not, as they pleased. This marital coding system for women is no longer as reliable or as popular as it once was.

- When addressing couples, use the form they use themselves: “Mr. and Mrs. Walter Evson”; “Adela and George Norrington”; “Dr. Guy and Mrs. Elizabeth Phillips”; “Katherine Halstead and Frank Luttrell”; “Dr. Linda and Mr. Arnaud Hallet.” When addressing envelopes or typing the inside address, and each name is fairly long, put one to a line in alphabetic order.

- When writing to more than one person, use each person’s full name or use a social title plus last name for each. For single-sex groups, you may use “Mesdames” (“Mmes.”) for women and “Messieurs” (“Messrs.”) for men, although these terms have an old-fashioned ring

to them. These titles are followed by the individuals' last names only. When addressing both women and men, use an inclusive salutation such as "Dear Friends," "Dear Cochairs," "Dear Committee Members," or "To: (list names, one to a line in alphabetic order)."

## **SALUTATIONS, COMPLIMENTARY CLOSES, AND SIGNATURES**

### *Salutations*

The salutation (also referred to as a greeting) is set flush left. The first letter of the first word is capitalized but other modifying words are not ("My very dear Joanna"). All titles and names are capitalized. Use abbreviations for Ms., Mr., Mrs., Dr., but spell out religious, military, and professional titles such as Father, Major, Professor, Sister, Colonel. The salutation generally ends in a comma for personal or informal letters, and in a colon or a comma for business letters.

When possible, obtain the name of the person who is best suited to receive your letter and obtain the correct spelling of their name and verify their current title; call the company if necessary.

When you know the person's name, write: "Dear Neil A. McTodd" or "Dear Agnes Bailey" (full name with no social title) or "Dear Ms. Lee," "Dear Captain Crowe," "Dear Inspector Hopkins," "Dear Senator Burnside" (social title plus last name). The first convention is useful when you don't know the person's sex ("Audley Egerton") or which social title (Ms., Mrs., Miss) the person uses. Professional or academic titles (Dr., Representative) are always used instead of social titles (Mr., Miss).

When writing a form letter or when you don't know your correspondent's name, you can still write "Dear..." with nouns like: Neighbor, Subscriber, Friend, Motorist, Reader, Colleague, Student, Customer, Gardener, Client, Employee, Potential Employee, Parishioner, Collector, Cardholder, Concerned Parent, Initiate-Elect, Handgun Control Supporter, Member, Homeowner, Supplier, Executive, Aquarist, Equestrian, Do-It-Yourselfer. Or try job titles: Dentist, Copywriter, Electrician, Metallurgist, Customer Service Manager. Or use the company's name: Poulengay Upholsterers, Elliot-Lewis Stationers, Handford Lawn Care. You can also use an impersonal salutation like Good morning! Hello! Greetings! The best solution may be to replace the salutation with a subject line. (The outdated "Dear Sir or Madam" and "To Whom It May Concern" are not recommended.)

### *Complimentary Closes*

The complimentary close follows the body of your letter, with one

line of space between them. It always begins with a capital letter and ends with a comma. Words in between are not capitalized.

The most everyday, acceptable, and all-purpose complimentary closes are: Sincerely (used perhaps three-fourths of the time), Yours truly, Sincerely yours, Very sincerely yours, Very sincerely, Very truly yours. You cannot go wrong with one of these. Miss Manners (Judith Martin) says that business letters should close with “Yours truly”; “Can Miss Manners be the only person still alive who knows that?”

For a highly formal letter involving White House, diplomatic, judicial, or ecclesiastical correspondence, use: Respectfully yours or Respectfully. An informal letter in the same instances uses: Very respectfully yours, Yours respectfully, or Sincerely yours. In formal letters to members of Congress, senators, high-ranking politicians and government figures, priests, rabbis, and ministers, use: Yours very truly. The informal form is: Sincerely yours.

For most formal letters—regular business and personal—choose from among: Sincerely, Sincerely yours, Yours sincerely, Very sincerely yours, Very sincerely, Truly yours, Yours truly, Very truly yours, Yours very truly, Very cordially yours.

Informal closes include: Love, With all my love, Lovingly, Lovingly yours, Fondly, Affectionately, Yours affectionately, Sincerely, Sincerely yours, Cordially, Cordially yours, Yours cordially, Faithfully, Faithfully yours, Yours faithfully, As ever, As always, Devotedly, Yours, Best regards, Kindest regards, Warmest regards, Cheers, Your friend, Be well, Until next time.

Complimentary closes somewhere between formal and informal include: With all kind regards, Warm regards, Best regards, Best, Best wishes, With best wishes, With all best wishes, Cordially, Sincerely, All the very best, With every good wish, Warm personal regards.

After studying the above lists, choose one or two complimentary closes that reflect your letterwriting style and use them for most of your correspondence. It’s rarely worth the trouble to fit a special complimentary close to each letter.

## *Signatures*

Although there used to be many rules governing signatures, it’s fairly simple today: use the version of your name that you want the person to use for you. If there is any ambiguity (for example, the person knows you only under your pen name, birth name, married name, or business name), put the name that might be more easily recognized in parentheses under your signature. Signatures rarely include social titles, so omit the “Dr.,” “Ms.,” or “Mr.” (They may be typed on the name line, however.) In personal letters, your signature stands alone. In business letters, it is followed by your name and title (on one or two lines, depending on length). The name and title lines are typed

four lines below the complimentary close—more, if you have a particularly sweeping signature. If your name and title are given on the letterhead, omit them under your signature. When signing a letter for someone else, put your initials just below and to the right of the signature, often after a slash. When you write a letter on someone else's behalf, sign your own name above a name line that identifies you: "Son of Christina Light" or "Secretary to Cavaliere Giacosa."

If your salutation uses the person's first name, sign the letter with your first name (although in a business letter, your full name and title will be printed below your signature). Nonparallel salutations and signatures can be insulting and offputting. If you write "Dear Fred," and sign it "Dr. Francis Etherington," you have assumed a superior position; writing it the other way around presumes an intimacy that may not exist. Except in rare cases, the salutation and signature should be strictly parallel: "Dear Rosa,...Love, Judy"; "Dear Thomas Eustick,...Sincerely, Margaret Kraft."

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