

“Writing Letters”

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“Writing Letters” is made easy when some basic rules are followed. Of course, letters can ramble on, be disorganized and contain lots of errors if they are written to family or friends. But when preparing one of a business nature or for someone unknown to the writer, it should be done formally.

Basic rules to follow for formal letters include:

1. FROM – At the top of the page, against the left margin, spell out the name & address of the sender.
2. TO – Next, directly thereunder, do the same for the recipient.
3. DATE – Immediately thereunder, put the date.
4. RE: - Immediately thereunder, put the ‘subject’ of the letter.
5. DEAR _____ - Enter the addressee’s name.
6. Paragraph # 1 - THE PURPOSE OF THIS LETTER IS _____ - Spell out the purpose of the letter here.
7. Paragraph # 2 – BACKGROUND – Give the background facts.
8. Paragraph # 3 – CALL TO ACTION – State what you want done.
9. Paragraph # 4 – REASONS – List the reasons that the recipient of the letter should act in accordance with your call to action.
10. Paragraph # 5 – CONCLUSION or SUMMARY – Summarize the letter including a second mention of the call to action.
11. Paragraph # 6 – RESPONSE DATE – Request a written response on or before a date certain.
12. Paragraph # 7 – THANKS – Thank the person for giving attention to the contents of this letter.
13. SALUTATION – One or a few words here, thus ending the letter (i.e. “Sincerely”, “Gratefully”, “Respectfully yours”, etc.).

14. SIGNATURE – Sign the letter writer’s name.
15. CC: (copy recipients) – List them here, if any. If there’s need for a separate note to a particular copy recipient, make that a separate line of text.
16. BCC: (blind copy recipients) – Show each here on an individual copy of the letter (will not work this way on email but standard formatting will permit a blind copy recipient, just no line of text for same).
17. ATTACHMENTS: - List them here, if any.
18. ENCLOSURES: - List them here, if any.
19. Spacing – Use double-spacing between the above items # 1 - # 18 and single-spacing within each of same.
20. Length of letter – Keep it as short as possible. Try to get it all on a single page even if you must reduce the font size.
21. Response date requested – Use 3-5 business days for simple decisions; 10 business days for complicated decisions; and 15 business days as the absolute maximum.
22. Type, print or handwritten? Always type or hand print the letter to achieve maximum clarity.
23. Paper stock / colors / fonts – To be safe, always use easily read fonts (i.e. Ariel, Verdana, Tahoma) in black ink on white paper. This assures that photo copies of your letter will be clearly legible.

These rules may be applied to letters sent via email as well as snail mail. There is nothing at all wrong with disregarding the standard ‘email formatting’ and setting forth your own (as per the above) right there in the body of your email.

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