

One of the greatest secrets of success is knowing when to move on. With the right resignation letter, you will do so with satisfaction while leaving on good terms with your previous employer. Though you may think it would feel great to get a few things off your chest about how much you've come to hate the company you work for, it's in your best interest to be kind, polite, and helpful, so your professional future remains secure.

PART 1

1 Have a friendly but formal opening. This can be a tricky balance to maintain, but your goal should be to keep things amicable while maintaining your professionalism. Unless you really don't have a good or familiar relationship with your boss, you should begin your letter by saying "Dear" followed by your boss's first name. You can say something like, "Dear Lisa," before you announce your resignation. If you say, "Dear Ms. Smith," then your resignation may come off as too formal, especially if you do have a friendly or at least cordial relationship with your boss.

- Of course, if things happen to be more formal at your company and you normally call your boss "Mr. Jones," then you should stick to that in the letter — in that case, suddenly getting familiar would be strange.
- If your letter is typed on paper instead of email, just write the date at the top lefthand side, with your boss's name and address written below it.

2 Clearly state your intention to resign. It's important to state your intention to resign in clear terms so that your boss doesn't think you are open to an offer for a higher salary or other perks, or that you are open to a counteroffer though you've accepted a new position. You want to be crystal clear so you sound confident in your decision, or so you're not faced with the discomfort of your boss coming to you thinking there's a chance that you'll stay on, after all. Here are some ways you can clearly state your intention to resign:

- "I hereby submit my resignation as [your position here]."
- "Please accept this letter as notice of my resignation from my position as [your position here]."
- "It is with regret that I submit my letter of resignation as [your position here]."

3 Give proper notice. It is simple courtesy to give your employer a reasonable amount of time to fill your position. If your job is complicated, your employer may need time for you to train your replacement. Give notice of no less than two weeks. It may be common courtesy to give more notice if your position in the company is more elevated. Many people recommend using your given vacation time as an accurate measurement of how many weeks' notice you should give; if you have three weeks vacation, for example, you should give three weeks' notice, if you want to be polite. You should state your last work day immediately after you've stated your intentions to resign — you can even do so in the same sentence. Here's how you can go about it:

- "I hereby submit my resignation as [your position here] effective on July 12, 2014."
- "Please accept this letter as notice of my resignation from my position as [your position here]. My last day of employment will be July 12, 2014."
- "It is with regret that I submit my letter of resignation as [your position here]. I intend to work until the end of the month, with my last day being July 31, 2014."

4 State your reasons for leaving (optional). You don't have to be *too* thorough in this part, but it could be a nice gesture to state your reasons for resigning. If you're resigning because you're just really unhappy at the company, you don't have to go into detail about this. However, if you're resigning because of retirement, maternity leave, personal reasons, or, most commonly, because you've accepted an offer at a different company, then you can state this to give your boss a better sense of the situation. Here are some ways that you can state your reasons for leaving:

- "I was recently offered a new opportunity at a different company, and have decided to accept the offer."
- "I received an offer to serve as [position here] of a company that suits my needs, and after careful consideration, I've realized that this opportunity is the right path for me."
- "I would like to inform you that I will be retiring on April 3."
- "After much thought and consideration, I have decided not to return after maternity leave."
- "I have decided to resign for personal reasons."

5 State that you're willing to help out during the transition. *If* you're in a position that would be difficult to fill, and *if* you really feel you owe it to the company, then you can make it clear that you're happy to help train someone else to do your job or to smoothly pass on your duties. Ideally, if you were planning to resign, you might have been doing some of this already, little by little, but in any case, if you care about the company and know that you have big shoes to fill, you can mention that you're willing to help during the interim. Here's how you can state it:

- "I would be happy to help with the transition of my duties so that the company continues to function smoothly after my departure. I am available to help recruit as well as train my replacement."

6 Thank your employer for the experience. Resist the temptation to leave a piece of your mind unless you want to be remembered as an ungrateful whiner. In fact, do the opposite: document positive memories of your job. Mention how this job has positively influenced your career and how it has or can help you secure an even better position. This will leave your boss feeling like you've had a positive experience at the company and it will minimize any potential animosity you may encounter. Unless you really feel like your boss does not deserve any kind words, do this as a common courtesy. Here's what you can say:

- "I can't thank you enough for all of the experience and confidence my position has given me."
- "I want to give you my sincere thanks for all of the opportunities you have given me and for all of the knowledge I have gained at your company over the years."
- "I'll always be grateful to you for going above and beyond to ensure my success at my position."

7 Wrap up your letter on a kind note. The way you end your letter depends on what you stated earlier. If you said you'd be happy to help recruit and train a new person for your position, you can say something like, "You can reach me any time at [your phone number] or [your email address]." This will show your boss that you really are committed to the success of your

The Resignation Letter

company. Remember that you don't want to end on anything but a positive tone that leaves your boss feeling warm, or at least not furious.

- If you really do have a close relationship with your boss, you can go the extra mile to make this clear by ending by saying something like, "I'll never forget how much you've helped me over the years, and will always be grateful to you" or, "I never would have been able to secure this new position without all of your help and encouragement over the years."

8 Have a nice closing. End your letter by saying "Warmly," "Kind Regards," "Wishing you the best," or something similar just before you write your name. You can also just use "Sincerely" if you want to be more formal about it, but you can also use this opportunity to use a closing that really shows how grateful you are for your experience at the company.

PART 2

1 Stay professional. Be respectful and courteous. Do not use emotional or controversial language in your letter. You are a professional, so quit like a professional. If you have quit because of the working conditions at your company, you can kindly say so, but there's absolutely no reason to go into all of the details of why you have left the company. You can write them down on a different piece of paper for yourself, if it will make you feel better.^[7]

- Just remember that this letter will go in your personnel file and will be available any time a future employer calls the company asking about you; you don't want a negative letter to have an adverse effect on your future.

2 If you're turning in your resignation letter through email, stick to similar conventions.

These rules can be followed whether you're turning in a traditional resignation letter or if you're resigning over email. The only difference is that your email won't require you to write the date or your boss's address on the top lefthand side, and that you can title the subject of the email "Resignation" along with your name, to give your boss an idea of what to expect.

- Resignation over email is becoming more common than ever in today's tech savvy society, though you should have a sense of workplace etiquette when you decide the best path to take.
- With the mass transition to email for a lot of work correspondence, it's become common for resignation letters to have become a bit shorter than they used to be. Now, just 5-6 sentences can do the tricks instead of several detailed paragraphs.

3 Read it over before you turn it in. Though this piece of advice is true for any piece of professional correspondence, it's particularly important to give your resignation one last look before you turn it in. While checking for typos and grammatical mistakes is important, what's more important is that you're pleased with the overall impression given by the letter, and that it comes off as positive instead of hostile. You may just quickly get everything off your chest and want to turn it in immediately, but if you let it cool for an hour and read it over again, you may see that it could have been a bit more kind.

- Once you turn in the letter, there's no taking back anything you said. Make sure that it's something you're proud of, not a way to get back at your boss.

Sample Resignation Letter

Dear Jake,

I have had a wonderful experience working at Lucky Coin Machine Company these past three years. As a result, it is a bittersweet occasion that I write to you this morning, announcing my resignation from the company and my position as Regional Manager.

I leave in order to pursue creative writing as a full-time profession in New York City, a dream of mine for many years. My last official day in the office will be Friday April 13, 2016; two weeks from today.

I appreciate and value the lessons I learned under your tutelage. Thank you for the opportunities, the mentorship, and the support during these three years—it was truly a joy. Please let me know how I can be of assistance during this transition process. I plan to announce my departure at next week's staff meeting.

My Best,
Lynn Sherrill