

Business Letters

“Letter writing is the only device for combining solitude with good company” – Lord Byron

It is important for professionals to be educated on the functional importance of effective writing. In letter writing, precision and clarity of meaning are extremely important. Time is a valuable resource, and precise communication helps save the time of the writer as well as of the recipient.

To write an effective letter, one needs to understand the purpose of writing and then draft the letter focusing on the reader's perspective. To convince our readers, we need to follow these seven Cs:

Seven Cs

- Clarity
- Conciseness
- Correctness
- Completeness
- Conviction
- Cordiality
- Courtesy

Purpose

Formal letters are written for varied purposes as mentioned below:

- To inform
- To enquire
- To request
- To complain
- To sell a product, service or scheme
- To congratulate
- To order
- To collect dues
- To make an adjustment
- To apply for job

Structural Elements of Business Letters

- **Heading :** It is also known as the letterhead. The heading shows the organization's name, full address and phone number.

<p style="text-align: center;">Hard n Soft 13, Elgin Road Bangalore – 560001 Phone:(080) 2335810 Email:hard_n_soft@yahoo.co.in</p>

- **Date:** The component refers the date on which the letter is written.
The format of date is – 3 August 2013 or August 3, 2013

- **Inside address:** This part of the letter identifies the recipient's address and it is separated from the date by at least one blank line. It is always best to address the letter to a specific person.

Mr M Sinha		The General Manager
Info Industries Ltd.		Info Industries Ltd.
3-A East Patel Nagar	OR	3-A East Patel Nagar
Mumbai – 400001		Mumbai – 400001

- **Salutation:** This is nothing but greeting. The greeting in a business letter is always formal. It normally begins with the word 'Dear' and includes the person's last name.

Dear Professor Sinha

Dear Mr Pande

And if the person's name is unknown, it is advisable to use

Dear Sir/Madam

- **Message or The Body:** The body is written as text. It should be single spaced, with a blank line separating it from the preceding and the following parts of the letter. Skip a line between the greeting and the body and also between the body and the close.
- **Complimentary close:** This short, polite closing ends with a comma. Depending on the style of the business letter, it is written either at the left margin or its left edge. Here is a list of expressions that can be used for complimentary closing:
Sincerely, Cordially, Truly, Faithfully, Faithfully Yours, Truly Yours, Yours Obediently etc.
- **Signature Block:** The complimentary closing line is followed by the signature block, which includes the writer's signature, name and title. The signature block is placed four lines below the complimentary close.

Cordially,
Mr Shivam Singh
Sales Executive

- **Additional Elements:** Addressee Notation, Attention Line, Subject Line, Reference, Enclosure Notation, Copy Notation, Mailing Notation, Postscript

Layouts

Suitable an correct layout enhances the overall effectiveness of any letter. The layout helps to arrange all the elements of a formal letter in an organized manner. There are various layouts. But three major letter layouts are widely used.

- **Block / Complete block:** All elements except the letterhead heading are aligned with left margin. End punctuations are omitted.
Space after each element
- **Modified block:** Date, Complimentary close—aligned with right margin.
Comma after salutation and complimentary close
- **Semi Block Layout:** The heading, complimentary close and signature block are aligned vertically with the right margin. Each paragraphs begin a few spaces away from the margin.

Sample Formal Letter with standard additional elements (Full Block Layout)

Heading	<p style="text-align: center;">Residents' Welfare Association 345, Neheru Colony, Jawahar Nagar, Coimbatore – 000011 Phone: 9817580324</p>
Date	January 13, 2011
Mailing Notation	By Speed Post
Address Notation	Personal
Inside Address	Water Works Department Moorthy Complex Bapu Nagar Coimbatore
Attention Line	ATTENTION: Mr R. Kumar, In Charge, Water Supply
Salutation	Dear Mr R. Kumar,
Subject Line	SUBJECT: No water supply on January 10, 2011
Body	<p>I am extremely sorry to inform you that our colony did not have any water supply on the 10th of this month and we had to face acute water shortage because of this.</p> <p>I contacted your office on 10th January at 10.30 a.m. and the person at the receiving end informed us that the water supply has been stopped for certain areas because of some problems in pumping. But he ensured that the supply would resume by 5 p.m. To our dismay, we could not receive water on that day. The complaint letter signed by all the residents of this colony is enclosed. Please look into the matter and see to it that such lacuna does not occur at least in future.</p>
Complimentary Close Signature Block	Regards Sincerely, Ranbir Sinha President
Enclosure Line Copy Line	Enclosure(1) Copy: Chairman, Water Board

Business Letter Type and their Objectives

Types

Credit
Collection
Enquiry
Order Placement
Claim
Adjustment
Sales
Thank you/Follow up Letter
Acceptance/ Rejection
Persuasive

Objectives

To enquirer or request for loan
To collect past due accounts
To enquire the status of something
To place an order for products or services
To lodge a complaint and ask for a remedy
To inform how the complaint would be taken care of
To sell a product or service
To express courtesy / get updated information
To take up/refuse an offer or assignment
To convince someone

Some sample letters

Letters of Enquiry

An enquiry letter is useful when we need information, advice, names or directions. There are two types of enquiry letters – solicited and unsolicited enquiry letters. Solicited letters of enquiry are written when a business or agency advertises its products or services. A letter of enquiry is unsolicited if the recipient has not prompted the enquiry.

Solicited letter of enquiry (Modified Block Layout)

Institute of Research and Technology
Sector -54, Gurgaon
Ph: 0124-41424344, Fax: 0124 -434956
www.irt.edu.in

15 July, 2014

Mr S. Rana
General Manager
LG Electronics Ltd.
Okhala, Mthura Road
New Delhi – 110038

Dear Mr Rana

I am writing this letter to find out more about the newly launched LCD projector by your company. We happened to see your product in operation at a recently held international conference at Pune and subsequently read a couple of your advertisements in Times of India, New Delhi.

We have gone through your website to get detailed information on the product but have not been able to find the exact information we are looking for.

We are large technical institute operating in Gurgaon with 900 students in various professional courses. To make our classroom lecture delivery more effective, we are in the process of installing LCD projectors in each class.

We would like to seek your help in finding answers to the following questions:

1. What are the limitations of your products?
2. How long it can be used on a continuous basis?
3. Can the colour combination on be changed on the spot?
4. What is the life time of the product?

We would appreciate technical and objective answers to these questions, which will help us come to a decision with respect to this product.

I look forward to an early response.

Yours Faithfully

.....
Dr. R. Kumar
Dean, Academics

Claim Letter

A claim or an adjustment request is made when a company's product or service is not satisfactory.

Followings are the objectives of writing a claim letter:

- To bring the mistake either/fault to the notice of the supplying company
- To rectify the mistake either by repair or replacement

Effective complaints letters (and any other way of complaining) should be:

- **Concise** letters can be understood quickly.
- **Authoritative** letters - letters that are well written and professionally presented - have more credibility and are taken more seriously.
- **Factual** letters enable the reader to see immediately the relevant details, dates, requirements, etc., and to justify action to resolve the complaint.
- **Constructive** letters - with positive statements, suggesting positive actions - encourage action and quicker decisions.
- **Friendly** letters - with a considerate, cooperative and complimentary tone - are prioritised because the reader responds positively to the writer and wants to help.

A complaint letter can be written for any of the following reasons:

Billing Errors	Goods not matching the sample
Damaged Goods	Difference in agreed prices
Wrong goods/ quantity	Late delivery/ Non delivery
Unsatisfactory quality	Poor service

Sample Letter of Complain (Semi Block Layout)

Steelco Furniture
50, Lenin Srani, Kolkata- 700031
Ph: 044 – 48975612

Our Reference : TT/432
Your Reference: MB/45

May 6, 2014

Apex Mattresses Ltd.
Mayurganj
Vijay Nagar

Dear Sir,

Thank you for promptly delivering 200 mattresses in response to our order no.TT/432 on May 2 2014. However, we are sorry to state that upon checking of the consignment, we found that 55 of the 200 mattresses sent are badly soiled and faded.

I had placed this order for your high quality, affordable products, based on the recommendation. We propose to sell these mattresses at a winter sale in our area, five days from now. Advertisements for the same have already been made through the local media.

The mattresses received at our end must have been affected during transportation by water seepage owing to the recent rains. Therefore, I request you to replace these 55 damaged mattresses immediately. I have very little time left to arrange them from elsewhere. The damaged products will be sent back to you within two days at your cost by transport on receipt of the confirmations about replacement.

Kindly send us the replacement within two days of receipt of this letter and oblige. We thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

.....
S. Gupta
Sales Manager

Sample Adjustment Letter (Block Format)

J.V. Chemical Ltd.
G.T. Road, Gaziabad

August 9, 2014

M/S Ashoka Leathers Ltd.
13, S.Market, Pathankot

Dear Sir,

Please accept our sincere apology for delay in execution of your order dated July 5, 2014.

Owing to month long strike in the factory, followed by power cut and strike of U.P. Electricity Board Employees, the production has remained suspended for more than one month. This resulted in our falling behind the delivery schedule. Kindly understand our position that circumstances were beyond our control.

We feel extremely sorry about this inevitable delay that has caused you inconvenience. Now the situation has changed. We are doing our best to execute the pending orders.

We hope you will be supplied your goods before August 18, 2014.

Yours faithfully,

.....
D. Kumar
Sales Executive

Sales Letters

Sales letters are the most cost – effective and time – efficient means of marketing products or services. They are also a form of advertising. A good sales letter is able to achieve the following objectives.

Catching the reader's attention: The most immediate purpose of a sales letter is to capture the attention of the reader. For this, the beginning of the letter should be so captivating that the reader should read.

Creating a Desire: Having aroused the interest of the reader, the next part of a sales letter strives to sustain it. For this the letter has to point the benefits, features, and advantages of the product.

Carrying Conviction: Having created a desire in the reader's heart for the product, the next step is to convince him/her of the authenticity of our claims by arranging free demonstration for the potential customer, by providing a guarantee etc.

Inducing Action: The closing paragraphs of a sales letter is designed to persuade the reader to take action. Generally, in this part, we are required to make the offer tempting by making special offers etc.

A Sample Sales Letter

Florence Optical Ltd.
23. R.S.Road
Kolkata -1
Ph: (033) 5467023

29 September, 2013

Sima Mathur
243, Gandhi Marg
Kolkata -7000003

Dear Customer

Sub: Introduction of 'the ultimate' in the Hi tech series of sunglasses.

Eyes, your beautiful eyes, are the fathomless ocean of expression that deserves protection. With this aim in mind we at Florence Optical are constantly researching to provide better products to our customer.

'The Ultimate' is our latest range of optical accessories that caters to the need and comfort of your most precious eyes. The sunglasses designed incorporate the latest Light Sensing Technology. The glasses as well as the lenses have in built micro sensors that control the amount of light entering your eyes.

It is our tradition to not only employ the best of technology but also to infuse our products with the elegance and style that enhances your personality. Our limited edition range of sunglasses is simple and elegant in design without any false ornamentation. We feel that you deserve to be the first worthy owner of these glasses at a special 50% discount.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours
M. Sharma
Chief Executive

MEMO

A memo is a document written to pass information between people and departments within the organization. Since memos are written to deal with many official matter, one may be expected to write a memo to do any of the following in a professional organization:

To confirm	To suggest
To request	To explain
To announce	To report
To caution or warn	

Sample Memo

J.K.Chemicals Ltd
Kolkata
Interoffice Memorandum

No: AK/265

Date: 24 March, 2013

To: Mr S.D.Dutta, Accounts Clerk

From: Mr R.D. Sharma, M.D

Subject: Absence from duty on 20 March, 2013

It came to my notice that you were not present in the office on 20 March, 2013. Your application for leave has not been received yet.

Will you kindly explain the cause for being the cause for being absent? If your reply does not reach or before April 3, 2013, administrative action can be taken against you.

R.D.sharma
Managing Director

Sample Meeting Minutes

(Excerpted from *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised Edition*)

MINUTES AND REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Minutes

The record of the proceedings of a deliberative assembly is usually called the minutes, or sometimes - particularly in legislative bodies - the journal. In an ordinary society, unless the minutes are to be published, they should contain mainly a record of what was done at the meeting, not what was said by the members. The minutes should never reflect the secretary's opinion, favorable or otherwise, on anything said or done. The minutes should be kept in a substantial book or binder.

CONTENT OF THE MINUTES. The first paragraph of the minutes should contain the following information (which need not, however, be divided into numbered or separated items directly corresponding to those below):

- 1) The kind of meeting: regular, special, adjourned regular, or adjourned special;
- 2) The name of the society or assembly;
- 3) The date and time of the meeting, and the place, if it is not always the same;
- 4) The fact that the regular chairman and secretary were present or, in their absence, the names of the persons who substituted for them; and
- 5) Whether the minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved-as read, or as corrected-and the date of that meeting if it was other than a regular business meeting. Any correction is made in the text of the minutes being approved; the minutes of the meeting making the correction merely state that the minutes were approved "as corrected".

The body of the minutes should contain a separate paragraph for each subject matter, giving, in the case of all important motions, the name of the mover, and should show:

- 6) All main motions (10) or motions to bring a main question again before the assembly except, normally, any that were withdrawn* - stating:

- a) the wording in which each motion was adopted or otherwise disposed of (with the facts as to whether the motion may have been debated or amended before disposition being mentioned only parenthetically); and

- b) the disposition of the motion, including - if it was temporarily disposed of any primary and secondary amendments and all adhering secondary motions that were then pending;

- 7) Secondary motions that were not lost or withdrawn, in cases where it is necessary to record them for completeness or clarity-for example, motions to Recess or to Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn (among the privileged motions), or motions to Suspend the Rules or grant a Request to Be Excused from a Duty (among the incidental motions), generally only alluding to the adoption of such motions, however, as ". . . the matter having been advanced in the agenda on motion of . . ." or ". . . a ballot vote having been ordered, the tellers . . .";

- 8) All notices of motions and

- 9) All points of order and appeals, whether sustained or lost, together with the reasons given by the chair for his or her ruling.

The last paragraph should state:

- 10) The hour of adjournment.

Additional rules and practices relating to the content of the minutes are the following:

- ☐ The name of the seconder of a motion should not be entered in the minutes unless ordered by the assembly.

☐ When a count has been ordered or the vote is by ballot, the number of votes on each side should be entered; and when the voting is by roll call, the names of those voting on each side and those answering "Present" should be entered. If members fail to respond on a roll-call vote, enough of their names should be recorded as present to reflect that a quorum was present at the time of the vote. If the chair voted, no special mention of this fact is made in the minutes.

☐ The proceedings of a committee of the whole, or a quasi committee of the whole, should not be entered in the minutes, but the fact that the assembly went into committee of the whole (or into quasi committee) and the committee report should be recorded.

☐ When a question is considered informally, the same information should be recorded as under the regular rules, since the only informality in the proceedings is in the debate.

☐ When a committee report is of great importance or should be recorded to show the legislative history of a measure, the assembly can order it "to be entered in the minutes," in which case the secretary copies it in full in the minutes.

☐ The name and subject of a guest speaker can be given, but no effort should be made to summarize his remarks.

THE SIGNATURE. Minutes should be signed by the secretary and can also be signed, if the assembly wishes, by the president. The words Respectfully submitted - although occasionally used - represent an older practice that is not essential in signing the minutes.

FORM OF THE MINUTES. The principles stated above are illustrated in the following model form for minutes:

The regular monthly meeting of the L.M. Society was held on Thursday, January 4, 20__, at 8:30 P.M., at the Society's building, the President being in the chair and the Secretary being present. The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved as corrected.

The Treasurer reported the receipt of a bill from the Downs Construction Company in the amount of \$5,000 for the improvements recently made in the Society's building. The question put by the chair "that the bill be paid" was adopted.

Mr. Johnson, reporting on behalf of the Membership Committee, moved "that John R. Brown be admitted to membership in the Society." The motion was adopted after debate.

The report of the Program Committee was received and placed on file.

The special committee that was appointed to investigate and report on suitable parking facilities near the Society's building reported, through its chairman, Mrs. Smith, a resolution, which, after debate and amendment, was adopted as follows: "Resolved, That . . . [its exact words immediately before being acted upon, incorporating all amendments]."

The resolution relating to the use of the Society's library by nonmembers, which was postponed from the last meeting, was then taken up. This motion and a pending amendment were laid on the table after the chair announced that the guest speaker had received a phone message which would require his early departure.

The President introduced the guest speaker, Mr. James F. Mitchell, whose subject was _____.

At the conclusion of Mr. Mitchell's talk, the resolution relating to the use of the Society's library by nonmembers was taken from the table. After amendment and further debate, the resolution was adopted as follows: "Resolved, That . . . [its exact wording immediately before being finally voted on]."

Mr. Gordon moved "that the Society undertake the establishment of a summer camp for boys on its lakefront property." Mrs. Thomas moved to amend [page 456] this motion by inserting the word "underprivileged" before "boys." On motion of Mr. Dorsey, the motion to establish the camp, with the pending amendment, was referred to a committee of three to be appointed by the chair with instructions to report at the next meeting. The chair appointed Messrs. Flynn, Dorsey, and Fine to the committee.

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 P.M.

Lashaunda Williams, Secretary