

How to Write a Business Letter

A business letter is a formal means of communication between two people, a person and a corporation, or two corporations. Business letters differ from personal letters because they follow very strictly set rules for composition. Many people are intimidated by the prospect of writing to strict guidelines, however business letters are nothing to be afraid of. They are too useful a tool to be stigmatized by the public.

Before you begin writing, answer the following questions:

1. What is my purpose in writing this letter/memo/report?
2. What does my reader want or need to know to understand my message?
3. Have I answered important questions and provided the necessary information for the reader?
4. Did I accomplish my purpose?
5. Have I included boring, confusing, or distracting information?
6. What do I want the reader to do when he or she is done reading this?
7. Is that clear to the reader?
8. Have I included all the information necessary for the reader to take this action?

DEFINITION OF A BUSINESS LETTER

A business letter serves the main purpose of communication between two companies, or it is a method to talk to different people within a business.

PURPOSE OF A BUSINESS LETTER

The purpose for business writings is to inform readers of information you want to get across or possibly persuade the readers to do something.

THE 7 C 's OF BUSINESS WRITING

Most problems with business letters are they are either hard to understand or very long and drawn out. One solution that many writers use to correct this problem is to double check the writing to make sure it follows the seven C's of business writing. The seven C's are:

- Clear
- Concise
- Correct
- Courteous
- Conversational
- Convincing
- Complete

If you as a writer are able to effectively do all or part of these seven guidelines, then your paper will be on its way to being a good business letter.

KEEPING YOUR LETTER TO THE POINT

The first thing you need to make sure of when writing a business plan is to make sure that you are not wasting the reader's time. There are two questions to make sure that you are not wasting their time and they are, "why am I writing" and "what do I want to achieve." If you are able to answer these two questions then, then your writing will be a third of what it would have been if you as a writer just sat down and started to write. It is a good thing that your letter is short because that way you are getting straight to the point of what you want your readers to know.

COMMON TYPES OF BUSINESS LETTERS

There are many different types of business letters that a person can write to achieve different things. The key to writing a letter that will achieve what you want is to know what type of letter you are writing. The different types of letters are: acknowledgement, adjustment, complaint, inquiry, order, and response letter.

Acknowledgement letter = This letter is meant to thank the reader for something they did for you in the office.

It could simply be saying thanks for receiving something the reader sent or maybe thanking them for their help with something. This type of letter is not required in a business environment, but it is appreciated.

Adjustment Letter = This letter should be used in response to a written complaint against someone or something. The purpose of it is to inform the reader that actions are being taken against the wrong doing as well as it serves as a legal document acknowledging the complaint.

Complaint Letter = The complaint letter is much like the adjustment letter except no wrong doing as taken place. Instead, this letter is just to let the reader know that an error as been found and needs to be corrected as soon as possible. Once again, this letter is a legal document letting the reader know that something is being done to correct the problem.

Inquiry Letter = An inquiry letter is written as a request for a certain something or in response to a request made by someone. The object of the inquiry letter is to get the object or material requested in the letter.

Order Letter = Order letters are exactly as they sound, they are used to order material that is running low and will be needed soon. This type of letter is commonly known as a PO (purchase order). This letter is also a legal document showing a transaction between a business and a vendor.

Response Letter = A response letter is also exactly how it sounds. It is a letter written in response to another letter received by someone. The objective of this type of letter is to fulfill the request made by the person you are writing this letter to.

BUSINESS WRITING CHECKLIST

Once you have completed your business letter, there is a checklist that you can go through in order to make sure you letter is up to par. The basic idea of the checklist is to make sure the letter is: short, simple, strong, and sincere. If you go back and find that your letter has all of these qualities, then there is a good chance you have written an effective business letter.