

How to Write a Business Letter

Contributed by Business Letters Admin
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1. What's
your point? State it clearly and concisely

A good business letter does not ramble on; it supplies all pertinent information in a clear and concise manner. Your sentences should be no longer than 2 ½ lines. The complete letter should still fit easily on one side of an 8 ½" x 11" sheet of paper.

2. State
your purpose in the opening sentence

Many professionals skim their mail quickly. They rarely read each letter slowly. Therefore, it is necessary to state your purpose in the opening sentence of the letter. It is also best to use active voice instead of passive voice.

3. Use a
formal tone

Remember that the tone of a business letter should be formal, not conversational English. Do not crowd too many ideas into one sentence or the reader will become lost in the tangle of words. After skimming the first few sentences, an interested reader will slow down and read a well-written letter more closely.

4. Correct
spelling and grammatical errors

Readers and skimmers notice spelling and grammatical mistakes, so spell- and grammar-check your document. Remember, however, that a spell check will not help if you spell the word correctly but use it incorrectly. For example, the words "affect" and "effect" are often mistakenly interchanged. Consult a dictionary if you are unsure of your word usage.

5. Reread

your letter

Many people write an important letter, print it out and mail it without further consideration. If possible, let your finished letter sit on the computer for an hour or two, and then reread closely. You may be surprised at the number of simple mistakes you will find.

6. Get a second opinion

If you have a competent friend who is willing to help you, have him or her read the letter silently, or you can read the letter out loud and ask for his or her comments. Even if you are alone, reading the letter out loud will prove useful as you process the information in a different way.