



## Writing Business Letters

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A good business letter is brief, straightforward, and polite. If possible, it should be limited to one single-spaced typewritten page. Because it is so brief, a business letter is often judged on small, but important, things: format, grammar, punctuation, openings and closings. A business letter is not the place to try out fancy fonts or experimental writing styles.

### Three Main Styles

- **Full block style:** Align all elements on the left margin.
- **Modified block style:** Down the middle of the page, align the return address, date, closing, signature, and typed name; align other elements on the left page margin.
- **Indented/British format:** align the return address, date, closing, signature, and typed name on the right; align other elements on the left page margin. Indent every paragraph instead of skipping a line.

### Elements of a Standard Business Letter

- **Return Address/ Sender's Address:** Your address (or the address of the company you represent). If you are using preprinted stationery, there is no need to retype the information.

- **Date:** Leave two blank lines after the return address. Always spell out the month and include the day, a comma, and the year.
- **Inside Address:** Leave a blank line after the date. Then type the address of the person or company to whom you are writing.
- **Salutation:** Type Dear, followed by the person's name. End the line with a colon. If you don't know the name of the person, use a title instead (i.e., Dear Editor, Dear Madam).
- **Body:** Align your message on the left margin. Skip a line before starting a new paragraph, but do not indent the paragraph's first line. Make sure that each paragraph is clear and concise.
- **Closing:** Leave two lines of space after your last body paragraph, then use a conventional closing, followed by a comma (i.e., Sincerely, Sincerely Yours, Respectfully).
- **Signature:** Your signature should appear below your closing. Unless you have established a personal relationship with the person you are writing, use both your first and last name.
- **Name and Position:** Four lines after the closing, type your full name. Do not include a title (Mr. or Mrs.). If you are writing on behalf of an organization, type your title on the next line.
- **Abbreviations at the end of a letter:** If you send a copy of a letter to someone other than the person addressed, use cc: and the person's name. Use Enc. or Enclosure if you enclose something with the letter. If someone else types it, put the writer's initials in capitals, then a slash and the typist's initials in lowercase: MT/fjr. Just one abbreviation should appear on a line.

## Sample Business Letter (Full Block Style)

Mrs. Clara Winters  
12187 S. Polo Dr.  
Fairfax, VA 22030

**Return Address**

May 26, 2002

**Date**

The Tiny Tots Toy Company  
15456 Pyramid Way Inside  
College Park, FL 33133

**Address**

Dear Customer Service Representative:

**Salutation**

I recently purchased one of your Tiny Tents (Model #47485) for my three-year old. Unfortunately, after viewing the components that came with the product, I discovered that four of the parts were missing. Also, the instructions that came with the tent are in Portuguese and Russian, but not in English or French, the two languages I speak. These two unforeseen problems have resulted in the tent remaining unassembled and unacceptable as a toy for my daughter.

**Body**

I am writing to request replacements for the missing parts, and a copy of the full set of assembly instructions (in English or French) for the model I purchased. If reasonable arrangements are not made within ten business days, I will return the tent to the store I purchased it from and expect a full refund. To assist you in processing my request, I am including a copy of my sales receipt and a list of the missing parts.

I have purchased other toys manufactured by your company in the past, and have always been impressed with the quality and selection that Tiny Tots has made available to its customers. I sincerely hope this is a one-time incident, and that any future purchases I make will live up to the standard my family has come to expect from your company.

Sincerely,

**Closing**

Clara Winters

**Signature**

Enc: 2

**Typed Name**

**Abbreviation**