



Writing Business Letters

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