

Parts of a Business Letter

A business letter presents complete information in the order below.

Heading

The heading gives the writer's complete address, either printed in the letterhead or typed out, plus the date. (If the address is part of the letterhead, place only the date in the upper lefthand corner. See sample on page 299.)

Inside Address

The inside address gives the reader's name and complete mailing address (including the company name). If you're not sure which person to address or how to spell his or her name, call the company and ask. If the person's title is a single word or very short, place it after the name, separated by a comma. Longer titles go on a separate line.

Salutation

The salutation personalizes the letter. Use *Dear* with people only, not department or company names. Place a colon after the name. (See "Business Writing," at 530.2)

Body

The body contains your message in single-spaced paragraphs with double spacing between them. The body of your letter is organized in three parts: (1) the beginning states why you are writing, (2) the middle provides all the needed details, and (3) the ending focuses on what should happen next.

Complimentary Closing

The closing politely ends the message with a parting word or phrase—*Sincerely*, *Yours sincerely*, *Yours truly*,—followed by a comma. Capitalize only the first word of complimentary closings.

Signature

The signature makes the letter official. It includes the writer's handwritten name and corresponding typed name.

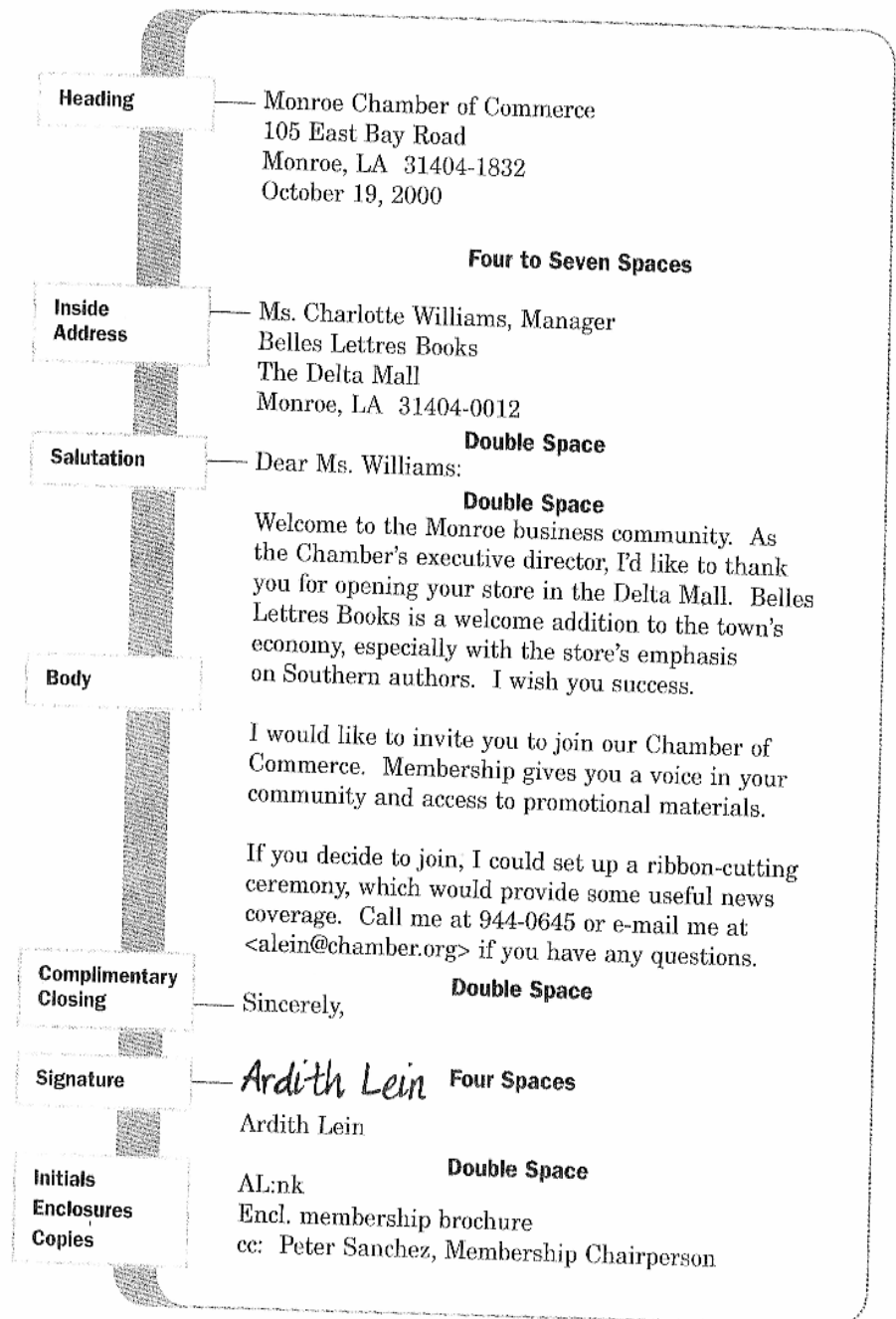
Initials, Enclosures, Copies

When someone types the letter for the writer, that person's **lowercased initials** appear after the writer's capitalized initials, separated by a colon.

If a document (brochure, form, copy) is **enclosed** with the letter, the word *Enclosure* or *Encl.* appears below the initials.

If a **copy** of the letter is sent elsewhere, type "cc:" and follow with the name of the person or department receiving the copy.

Sample Business Letter



WRITING GUIDELINES

Business Letters

■ PREWRITING

1. **Considering Your Audience . . .** Who is your reader and how will he or she feel about your message?
2. **Determining Your Purpose . . .** Jot down your reason for writing or what you want your reader to know or do.
3. **Gathering Details . . .** Collect the information you will need for your letter. Think about the best way to organize and present it.

■ WRITING AND REVISING

4. **Organizing the Details . . .** Organize your letter into three parts.

Beginning: Introduce the message by stating the subject and purpose of your letter.

Middle: Present whatever information is appropriate for the kind of letter you are writing—a letter of *request, complaint, information, persuasion, application, or thank-you*.

Ending: Focus on the outcome. What do you want the reader to do, and when, and how? Is there an action that you will take?

5. **Improving Your Writing . . .** Revise your first draft, checking for the following:

- ⊙ accurate, interesting details that answer the reader's questions
- ⊙ paragraphs that each develop one main idea
- ⊙ a polite and respectful tone (See "Using Fair Language," pages 529-531.)

■ EDITING AND PROOFREADING

6. **Checking for Style and Accuracy . . .** Check your letter for the following traits or qualities:

- ⊙ smooth-flowing sentences
- ⊙ clear, natural word choice (See pages 85-88.)
- ⊙ correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and usage
- ⊙ correct letter form

[HOT LINK] Use "Assessment Rubric," page 308, as a helpful revising and editing guide.

7. **Preparing a Final Copy . . .** Neatly type or keyboard your letter. Center it on the page and keep the margins even on both sides. Address the envelope, add correct postage, and mail your letter. (See page 307.)

Sample Request Letter

245 Oak Street, NE
Savannah, GA 31408
February 11, 2000

Director of Tourism
Colombian Embassy
P.O. Box 783
New York, NY 10023

Dear Director:

Beginning
Introduce
yourself and
tell why you
are writing.

I am a sophomore at Washington High School in Savannah, Georgia. For my World Cultures class, I'm working on a research paper and visual presentation about Colombia, and I need more information.

Middle
Supply the
details and
state your
specific
request.

In my presentation, I'm taking on the role of a travel agent explaining why tourists should visit Colombia. Because your agency is in charge of Columbia tourism, I thought that someone there could provide the information I need. Please send me whatever booklets, pamphlets, or Web-site addresses you can.

If possible, please send the information by March 3. Then I will have time to finish the project by my March 25 deadline.

Ending
End with a
thank-you
and closing
thought.

Thank you for considering my request. If you would like, I'll send you a copy of the finished paper that will go along with the visual display.

Sincerely,

Nick Davis

Nick Davis

Sample Persuasive Letter

936 Penning Drive
Almonville, KY 41233-6120
May 28, 2000

Ms. Alice Roosenbach
School Board President
Roosevelt High School
837 Chester Street
Almonville, KY 41233-4546

Dear Ms. Roosenbach:

**Beginning
Introduce
your topic.**

My lab group and I really enjoyed Mr. Finch's biology class this year. We especially liked the unit on animal systems. However, while the teacher was good and the subject was interesting, the poor condition of our lab tools made lab work frustrating.

**Middle
Explain the
need and
make the
request.**

My group had several problems. For example, the pad in the bottom of our dissecting pan was too hard for pins, our scissors fell apart, and our scalpel was too dull to cut anything. In fact, our probe was the only tool that worked.

Mr. Finch often had to just point out what we needed to know. We still learned, but we wished we had had better tools to dissect the animals ourselves. Our school needs new dissecting equipment so future students will have that chance.

**Ending
Encourage
reasonable
action.**

As you set the budget for next year, please consider the biology class. It's a great class, but new equipment would make it even better. Please let Mr. Finch know what you decide.

Sincerely,

Miranda Scholten

Miranda Scholten
cc: Mr. Finch

Sample Application Letter

326 Ash Boulevard
Florence, OR 97439-3216
March 23, 2000

Dr. Ray Peters
Communications Department Chair
St. Xavier College
32 Fountain Street
Omaha, NE 68102-6070

Dear Dr. Peters:

**Beginning
Explain how
you learned
about the
position.**

In response to the brochure I received from St. Xavier College, I am applying for a position on the staff of the *Xavier News*. I have enclosed a recommendation from my high school English teacher as well as several articles that I wrote for my high school newspaper, the *Florence Flier*.

**Middle
Describe
your
qualifications.**

I have been on the staff of the *Florence Flier* for four years, and this year I am the editor. I have always enjoyed English, and I plan on majoring in journalism at St. Xavier College. I am an organized, creative person, and I have never missed a deadline. In addition to writing and editing, I do layout work.

**Ending
Politely offer
additional
information
and thank
the reader.**

If you would like more information, please let me know by calling 555-997-3205 anytime during the day or by e-mailing me at <greensleeves@aol.com>. Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Allison Emerson

Allison Emerson

Encl. recommendation and newspaper articles

Sample Thank-You Letter

2518 Fourth Avenue, SW
Columbus, OH 43230
March 16, 2000

Mr. Tim Lindon
1286 Elm Street, NW
Columbus, OH 43230

Dear Tim:

Beginning
Explain
why you
are saying
thank-you.

Thanks for tutoring me in algebra! I know you're a busy college student, but you took the time to help me understand things like factoring, variable equations, and manipulating exponents.

Ever since school started in August, I had big-time problems with algebra! I was afraid that if I got called on, I'd make a mistake and everyone would laugh. When the teacher asked if anyone had questions, I would slouch way down in my chair because I was scared to say that I didn't understand.

Middle
Provide the
details.

But now, thanks to you, I've pulled up my grade. Your way of teaching algebra made it easy to remember the basics. I especially liked the way you made up the rhyme to help me remember the quadratic formula. That was the part that gave me the most trouble. You've made learning algebra easier and even fun!

Ending
Restate your
thanks and
end politely.

Thanks so much for your patience, and good luck. I hope you decide to become a teacher. You'd be great!

Sincerely,

Andrea McGrady

Andrea McGrady

Sending Your Letter

Addressing the Envelope

Address the envelope correctly so your letter can be delivered promptly. Place the return address in the upper left corner, the destination address in the center, and the correct postage in the upper right corner. Make sure that the destination and return addresses on the envelope match the inside and heading addresses on the letter.

ANDREA MCGRADY
2518 FOURTH AVE SW
COLUMBUS OH 43230

postage

MR TIM LINDON
1286 ELM ST NW
COLUMBUS OH 43230

There are two acceptable forms for addressing the envelope: the older, traditional form and the new form preferred by the postal service.

Traditional Form

Ms. Theresa Chang
Goodwill Industries
9200 Wisconsin Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20814-3896

Postal Service Form

MS THERESA CHANG
GOODWILL INDUSTRIES
9200 WISCONSIN AVE
BETHESDA MD 20814-3896

Official United States Postal Service Envelope Guidelines

1. Capitalize everything in the address and leave out all punctuation.
2. Use the list of common abbreviations found in the *National ZIP Code Directory*. (See page 481.) Use numerals rather than words for numbered streets and avenues (9TH AVE SE, 3RD ST NE).
3. If you know the ZIP + 4 code, use it. You can get this information by phoning one of the postal service's ZIP-code information units.