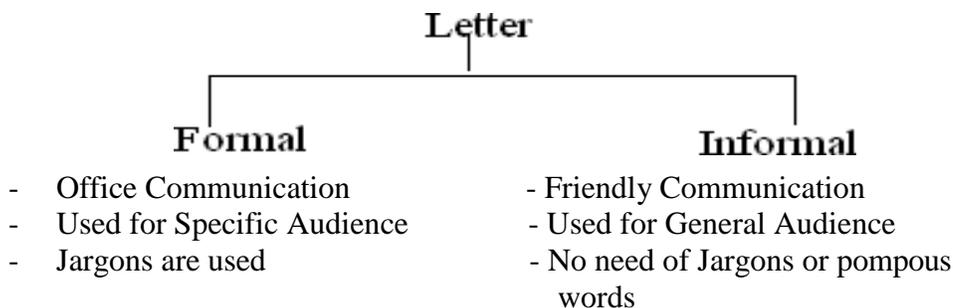# Letter Writing as an Important Tool for Business or Technical Communication

There are many modern communication methods to communicate in business or technical field, such as cell phones, SMS, E Mails, Internet, Group Discussion, Meetings, etc. In short all the verbal and non-verbal tools of communication are being used, letters are very important and an integral part of today's business communication. The success of any modern business, to a large extent, depends on the uses of business letters.

Business letters play an important role to enhance and establish a lasting relationship within the companies, institutions, and organizations. A business letter is a formal way of communicating between two or more parties. A good letter is a master key that opens the locked doors to expand the business. It can be informational, persuasive, motivational or promotional.

Types of Letter Writing:

There are many different types of the letter writing, mainly two types of the Letter: (1) Formal Letter (2) Informal Letter. Formal letters are usually business letters; where as informal letters are personal letters or friendly letters.

Letter
- Formal
- Informal

Formal	Informal
- Office Communication	- Friendly Communication
- Used for Specific Audience	- Used for General Audience
- Jargons are used	- No need of Jargons or pompous words

How to Write a Business Letter:

The art of writing a business letter takes practice, knowledge about proper form and the ability to put the thoughts and feelings into words which are associated with the letter. If you are able to write a basic letter, that will help you to create letters for a variety of occasions. Some tips for writing a business letter are mentioned below:

- Always proofread your letter after writing it, check for sentence structure, grammar, spelling mistakes, etc.
- Proofread your letter again after you have revised it.
- Ensure all relevant and important details are included in the heading.
- Remember the paragraph format.
- Keep the recipient in mind, and write in a way that he or she can easily understand the letter.
- Be respectful when you write, even if you are writing a letter of complaint.
- Follow the layout rules when writing a letter.
- Be very careful to use spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Purpose of a Business Letter:

The only purpose of writing any business letter is to uphold or create or establish long-lasting relationship within the organizations, companies and institutes. But each individual letter has a unique purpose. Such as, if you are writing a job-application letter, the main purpose of the application is to gain the job or offering your services to your potential employer. In the same way, if you are writing a complain letter about damaged consignment, the main purpose of your letter is to inform the company about the damage as well as to request for a corrective action.

Business letters therefore are written for varied purposes such as, to inform, to congratulate, to enquire, to order, to sell a product, to make an adjustment, to request, to complain, to collect dues, to apply for a job, etc.

Structure of a Business Letter:

The most widely used format for business letters is "Block Layout", where the text of the entire letter is justified left. The text is single spaced, except for double spaces between paragraphs. Typically margins are about 1 inch on all sides of the document. According to the standard format of a business letter, any letter contains a specific structure. The parts of a business letter are:

1. <u>Heading/ Your Address/ Sender's Address:</u>

This element shows organization's or sender's name, full address, and telephone numbers. If Letterhead paper is not used, the sender's address is either aligned with left margin or few spaces away from the centre depending upon the layout of the letter.

Skip a line between your address and date.

2. <u>Date:</u>

Put the date on which the letter was written in the format – Month Date Year or Date month Year. For example "August 15, 2013"

<p align="center">or</p>
<p align="center">"15th August, 2013"</p>

Skip a line between date and inside address.

3. Inside Address:

 This part of the letter writing introduces the address of the person you are writing to along with the name of the recipient, its title and company name, the street address, post office box number, and the city and state.

If you don't know the name of a specific person, you can mention the job title of the recipient, i.e. *"The Head of General Department", "The Director", "The Principal"*, etc.

If you are writing internationally, the country name should be mentioned in capital letters in the last line of Inside Address, i.e.

> "Ms. Rose Sheron
> Corporate Communications Inc.
> Chicago, IL 60611
> USA"

Skip a line between inside address and subject line.

4. Subject Line:

It lets the recipient to find out what the letter is about at a glance. It can be placed above the Salutation or below the Salutation, i.e.

- "Subject: Request to provide project file.
  Dear Devang Patel:"

- "Dear Devang Patel:
  Subject: Request to provide project file."

Skip a line between subject line and salutation.

5. Salutation or The Greeting:

The Greeting will address the individual that the letter is being sent to. This is usually in the form of *'Respected Sir'* or *'Dear Sir'*. You may write salutation such as:

> "Dear Students:
> Dear Members:
> Dear Devang Patel:
> Honourable Sir:
> Respected Chief Guest:
> Ladies and Gentlemen:
> To Whom It May Concern:
> Dear Sir or Madam:"

Note that there is a colon after the salutation. Be sure to use a colon at the end of the name, not a comma as in personal letters.

Skip a line between salutation and the message.

6. Message or Body or Text:

The message or body or text where you write the content of the letter; the paragraphs should be single spaced with a skipped line between each paragraph.

The body of the letter will expand upon the introductory paragraph and the individuals can expand their thoughts and feelings further when it comes to a letter. Usually, this part of the letter occupies greatest amount of space.

Skip a line between message and complimentary close.

7. Complimentary Close or The Closing:

This part of the letter is a single word or phrase. The letter usually ends with such words:

"Sincerely, Yours sincerely,
Cordially, Yours obediently,
Truly, Yours faithfully,
Faithfully, Faithfully yours,
Respectfully, Truly yours, etc."

Note that there is a comma after the end of the closing or complimentary close and only the first word is capitalized.

Skip a line between complimentary close and signature box.

8. Signature Block:

Your signature, name, and title will go in this section, i.e.

"Yours Sincerely,

Ms. Priti Patel
Assistant Professor"

Usually, sign in blue or black ink with a pen in a space given between Complimentary close and printed name. An unsigned letter is of no value.

Skip a line between signature block and enclosure.

9. Enclosure:

If your letter contains other document, other than the letter itself, your letter will include the word *'Enclosure'*, i.e.

"Enclosure: A copy of project file."

This part of the letter appears at the bottom of the letter.

This is how we can learn about letter writing by knowing its types, purposes, structure, and various parts of the letter. Any body can establish a long lasting relationship with the reader by writing an appropriate structured letter. By using all above guidelines of writing a good letter, one can represent his/ her important information through letters, which can be the most powerful communication tool. Mr. Herbert N. Casson has rightly said that, "A good letter is a master key that opens markets and avenues; It opens the way or your goods or your services. It tells the story of the real character of your firm."

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