

## **CHAPTER 2**

# **FORMAT AND STYLES OF BUSINESS LETTERS**

### **Outline**

1. Elements of a Letter
2. Styles of Business Letters
  - 2.1 Full-Blocked Style
  - 2.2 Blocked Style
  - 2.3 Semi-Blocked Style
3. Punctuation in Business Letters
4. Grammar Review: Subject-Verb Agreement

### **Main Ideas**

1. A business letter consists of 8 main elements: the heading, the date line, the inside address, the salutation, the message, the complimentary closing, the signature parts, and reference initials. In some letters, 8 additional elements are included: the file reference, mailing notations, attention line, subject line, enclosure notation, carbon copy notations, blind copy notation and postscript.

2. There are 3 popular styles currently used in writing business correspondence.

2.1 Full-blocked style is the fastest style to type. It is an arrangement of a letter where all parts are flushed left. There is no indentation in the paragraphs; however, between each paragraph is double-spacing.

2.2 Blocked style is an arrangement of a letter where all parts are flushed left except the date line, complimentary closing and signature parts which are typed in the center of the letter. Moreover, the date line may end at the right margin; attention and subject lines may be typed in the center or indented five spaces.

2.3 Semi-blocked style is an arrangement of a letter that is exactly the same as that of blocked style except that each paragraph is indented.

3. Two punctuation styles are used in business letters: open and standard.

4. Subject-verb agreement is a basic grammatical element necessary for an effective business writing style.

## **Objectives**

**Students will be enabled to:**

1. Identify main and additional parts of a business letter.
2. Write a business letter in full-blocked, blocked, and semi-blocked styles.
3. Use punctuation in a business letter correctly.
4. Use subject-verb agreement in a business letter correctly.

## 1. Elements of a Letter

In business writing, it is important that the writer know the essential parts of a business letter. In addition, the writer must know the placement and the importance of each part in a business letter. The following are the 8 main parts of a business letter.

**1. The Heading** This includes the company's name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address. The company's logo or motto may be added. To create a good impression on the reader, the company usually hires a professional artist to design the letterhead. Styles, sizes and layout of a letterhead vary. Some examples are as follows:

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In case there is no printed letterhead, use a typed heading. However, do not use abbreviations except in the USA for states e.g. TX = Texas; CA = California; AZ = Arizona, etc.). If the street name is a number, write it in letters (Fifty-First Street for 51st St; Fifth Avenue for 5th Avenue, etc.). The exception is for a big number, i.e. 121st St. The following are some examples of a typed letterhead:

**The University of British Columbia**  
**Department of Anthropology and Sociology**  
**6303 N.W. Marine Drive**  
**Vancouver, B.C.**  
**Canada V6T 2B2**

or

**Christian Nursing College**  
**6th Floor, Bradley Building**  
**Bangkok Christian Hospital**  
**124 Silom Rd., Bangrak**  
**Bangkok 10500**

**2. The Date Line** All business correspondence must have a date line, consisting of a date, month, and year, to be evidence in time and a record of when any transaction or any particular matter occurs. Do not abbreviate the month and the year. It is also unwise to use a number to refer to a month. This can and will create confusion to the

reader because the Americans often begin the date line with a month, followed by a day and a year i.e.' 3/5/97 means March 5, 1997, while to the English person's understanding, it is May 5, 1997. To avoid unnecessary misunderstanding, write the month in letter form. Also, do not use *st. nd, rd* or *th* after the day of the month. The two following styles of the writing form for the date line are widely accepted:

January 1, 1997	or	1 January 1997
June 30, 1997		30 June 1997

1. **The Inside Address** This is the reader's name, job title (if known), name of the reader's company and the street address as to be typed on the envelope. The inside address is to be always placed on the left. In cases where the writer does not know the reader's name, begin the inside address with the job title.

**The following are some typical examples of the inside address:**

Mrs. Lena Swensens, Professor	James T. Fields, Head
Sales Supervisor	Department of English
Trust Home Appliances Inc.	University of North Texas
13 82 Fry Street, Denton, TX 7620 1	Lawrence, Kansas 8426 1

The President  
IRE Consultant Inc.  
**3200** North Cicero Street  
Des Moines, IA 503 17

The Personnel Manager  
International Printing House  
7 194 West End Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60624

It is always polite to address the reader with a courtesy title of Ms., Mrs., Mr., Dr., or Professor. The degree of the reader may be placed either in front of or after the reader's name. i.e. Dr. Edmund Burke or Edmund Burke. Ph. D.; Dr. Virginia Larsen or Virginia Larsen, M. D.

**4. The Salutation** It is a more common practice to address the reader with Dear and a courtesy title of Mr., Ms., Mrs., Dr. followed by the last name in a formal situation.

Dear Ms. Swan:

Dear Mrs. Adams:

Dear Mr. Larsen:

Dear Dr. Fields:

In a more informal business situation which implies a personal friendship, it is best to address the reader with Dear followed by the first name.

Dear Patricia,

Dear Boonsom,

Dear John.

When the reader's name is not known, it is best to address the reader with the title.

Dear Office Manager:

Dear Sales Supervisor:

Dear Vice-President for Academic Affairs:

With a Thai name, however, it is more accepted to address the reader, in a formal situation, with the first name.

Dear Mrs. Piyanart:

Dear Dr. Anchalee:

Dear Mr. Boonsom:

Dear Professor Udom:

In a business correspondence that is addressed to a company or to a group, the following salutation is used:

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Gentlemen:

Ladies:

In a very formal situation, the salutation in a singular form is as follows:

Dear Sir:

Dear Madam:



Dear Sir or Madam:

Madam:

Sir:

Sir or Madam:

The salutation in a plural form used in a very rare and formal situation is the following:

Dear Mesdames:

Dear Sirs:

Dear Sirs or Mesdames:

Mesdames:

Sirs:

Sirs or Mesdames:

5. **The Message** This is the heart of the matter. There are no exact rules as to how many paragraphs are considered an appropriate length of a business correspondence. It depends on the subject matter of each letter. However, there should be at least two paragraphs in a letter. Starting with the purpose of the letter, the writer may add a second paragraph expressing gratitude and best wishes or the like. Observe and follow basic principles of paragraph writing attentively, so as not to overload a lot of information in one paragraph.

**6. The complimentary closing** It is important to note that the style and tone of the complimentary closing vary and the writer should match the tone of the closing with that of the salutation. Avoid using such informal terms as “Best wishes,” except on special occasions. The terms, “Fondly,” “Love,” “Always,” and the like should be reserved for private correspondence.

The most common complimentary closings used in a business correspondence are as follows:

Sincerely,

Cordially,

Sincerely yours,

Cordially yours,

Yours truly,

To show a friendship relationship, the following complimentary closing may be used:

With warmest regards,

Best regards,

In a very formal situation, the complimentary closing may be as follows:

Yours very truly,

Very truly yours,

Very sincerely yours,

‘ x

✿

Very cordially yours,

Respectfully yours,

**6. The Signature Parts** This part includes the writer's signature and the writer's identification. However, some companies prefer having the company signature after the complimentary closing under the notion that the company is legally sending the letter, or that the sender of the letter is acting on a company's behalf, not as an individual. The common practice for writing the company signature is using all capital letters on the second line below the complimentary closing:

Sincerely yours,

TRUST HOME APPLIANCES INC.

Sincerely,

IBE CONSULTANT INC.

On the other hand, most companies omit the company signature because the company's name and address usually appear in the letterhead.

The writer's signature normally appears under the complimentary closing followed by the writer's identification (typed name and last name) on the next line and the writer's title below that line.

Hilda Jones

Personnel Manager

Billy G. Dixon, Chair  
Coordinator of Graduate Studies  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Michelle Neille  
Financial Clearance **Officer**  
International Programs & Services

Nancy Cunningham  
Service Vice President

**8. Reference Initials** This consists of the signer's initials (the first letters of his or her first and last names) in capitals followed by a slash or colon followed by the typist's lowercase initials. The signer's initials may be omitted if they are identified in the signer's identification. Sometimes, it may occur that three persons are involved in the writing process. One person writes it, the second person types it, and the third person signs it. In such cases, three initials appear.

MW: mp = Mary Williams signed the letter and Mathilda Parkers typed it.

RJ/sa = Robert Jones signed the letter and Susan Atkins typed it.

MW: mp: sa = Mary Williams signed the letter, Mathilda Parkers wrote it,  
and Susan Atkins typed it.

mp = Mathilda Parkers typed the letter and the signer's name is  
omitted.

In some business correspondence, eight additional elements are included:

**1. The File Reference** Each company has a large number of transactions in their  
business dealings. A filing system is a convenient method of reference. The common  
file reference is as follows:

Our Reference RT/27

Ref: MAS: ad 00911996

File: AN-6501

**2. Mailing Notations** A note indicating some special postal service is typed either  
above the inside address or below the reference initials.

Registered

The Personnel Manager  
International Printing House  
7 194 West End Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60624

or

MW: mp  
Special delivery

or

mp  
Airmail

**3. The Attention Line** This is used when a letter is addressed to a company or to a department, but you want it to be handled by a specific individual within the company. The attention line is also useful in a case where the individual specified is not available at that moment; then, the letter will be speedily forwarded to any other authorized personnel. The attention line should be typed all in capitals or underlined.

-Attention of Mr. Roger Williams

Attention: Ms. Virginia Kitchens

ATTENTION MR. JAMES T. FIELDS

ATTENTION PERSONNEL MANAGER

1. **The Subject Line** In order to alert immediate attention of the reader and to show courtesy, the subject line is included. It is either typed in all capitals or in underlined upper-and lowercase after the word Subject and a colon (:). The word Subject, however, may be omitted. The subject line is placed below the salutation before the message.

**The following are some examples of the subject line:**

SUBJECT: DAMAGED MATERIALS IN OUR ORDER NO. 5230

Subject: Order No. 58

NEW ACCOUNTING PROCEDURE

Payment by Credit Card in Our Store

5. **Enclosure Notation** This is to tell the reader that some items have been included in the same envelope or package. The following are some ways to write an enclosure notation which is normally placed on the left below the reference initials:

Enclosure

Enc.

enc.

Enclosures (2)

Enc. 2

Enclosure: Graduate Catalog

2 Enclosures

1 Enc.

Enclosures:

1. Tentative program
2. Application form

**6. Carbon Copy Notations** This part lets the reader know that a copy of the correspondence is sent to one or more persons. It is typed on the **left** below enclosure notation, both on the original and all duplicate copies of **the** letter. The cc may be



typed in all capitals or in lowercase letters and may be followed by a colon (:). The following are some examples of carbon copy notations:

cc Mr. Thomas Lau

CC Bangkok Insurance Co., Ltd., Marine Claim Division

cc: Mr. Barnaby H. Hughes

CC: Ms. Jeanette King

**7. Blind Carbon Notation** The **bcc** will not appear on the original copy of a letter, so the reader will not know that the letter had a copy sent out to a third party. It appears only on carbon copies in the upper **left** corner just for a quick reference.

**8. Postscript** Some message may be **left** out unintentionally after the writer finishes the letter. To avoid retyping the whole letter, the writer adds the left-out information in a postscript. However, some writers may want to draw the reader's attention to an important point. The postscript is placed at the bottom on the left. The letters **PS** are followed by a colon or a period, or may be omitted.

**The following is an example of a postscript writing:**

P.S. The order **B5X** is urgently needed.

We need 5 dozen black and white tablecloths by 15 January 1997.

## The Second Page

If the message can't be completed on one page, continue it on the second page. The most common information carried over on the second page is the name of the reader or the name of the addressee followed by the page number and the date as follows:

Mr. Samuel Wilton

or

Mr. Samuel Wilton

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### **Main and Additional Parts of a Business Letter**

International Publishing Company

Mercantile Building, Suite 20

Miami, Florida 33 10 1

(1) Heading

[Letterhead]

October 17, 19. .

(2) The Date Line

Our file number: 23 1-48

(3) The File Reference

Special Delivery

(4) Mailing Notations

Wilton Bros., Inc.

889-02 North 12 Street

Chicago, IL 60699

(5) The Inside Address

Attention of Mr. Kay M. Langley

(6) The Attention Line

Dear Sir:

(7) The Salutation

Subject: Order No. 58

(8) The Subject Line

x

x

(9) The Message

x

x

x

x

Sincerely yours,

(10) The Complimentary Closing

International Publishing Company