

Format for a Business Letter

1. Return address of the letter writer.

1600 Main Street
Springfield, Kansas 12345

(4 single spaces)

2. The date of the letter.

(Begin with the month; use a comma) December 1, 2003

(Double Space)

3. Complete name, title, and address of the recipient.

Use "Mr." for a male recipient. If you do not know how a female recipient prefers to be addressed, it is best to use "Ms."

Ms. Anna Brown, Chair
Department of Linguistics
Right State University
1415 University Drive
Felicity, OH 45434

(Double Space)

4. Salutation with a colon. Address as Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss and their LAST NAME only.

Dear Ms. Brown:

(Double Space)

5. Body of the letter.

It is best to keep an initial business letter short. Business people are busy and do not have time to read long letters! In a one-page letter, you will usually only need three or four paragraphs, single spaced. **Use a double space in between paragraphs.** See examples that follow. Your first paragraph should identify whom you are, where you are from, and why you are writing.

The second paragraph can be a "kiss up" paragraph in which you get specific about why you are writing to that particular person and why they are an "expert". And/or you may want to tell them why you admire them so much. (This is an optional paragraph)

The third paragraph should ask for the information you need from the person. If you are asking several questions, you will type those separately and indicate they are on an enclosed sheet. If you plan to submit a self-addressed, stamped envelope indicate it in this paragraph. Including a SASE can indeed help in getting your letters returned to you. If you do not include one, be sure to note that they can contact you at the address at the top of the letter in care of Ms. Jennifer Zinn.

Finally, thank them for taking their time in reading your letter and for their response.

(Double Space)

6. Closing.

The most common closing is "Sincerely." Follow this with a comma. Skip four single lines after the closing and type your name. Sign your name in the space above your name.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Wilson

Jonathan Wilson

7. Enclosure.

If you are enclosing additional information with your letter such as your questions or something for them to sign, skip two single lines after your typed name and type "Enclosure" or "Enclosures." If you use the plural, you have the option of stating the number of enclosures in parentheses.

Enclosures (2)

Additional Information

1. Use block style – do not indent paragraphs.
2. If the recipient has a title, use it instead of Mr. or Ms. For example, use Dr. Brown if writing to a professor that has that particular title.
3. If you are writing to a band, address as Dear Members of Name of Band:
4. Do not use shortened verbs (contractions) such as don't. Use do not instead.
5. Your request letter is not like a "note" to your friends. It should have a more business-like tone and appearance. Do not begin with "Hi" or "Hey, what's up" etc.
6. Keep the letter fairly brief and to the point. You should not have more than one page for your letter when typed unless you are including your questions on a separate paper.
7. Do NOT conclude with a personal closure like "love" or "love ya lots." Sincerely is quite effective and appropriate.
8. If you are including questions separately, place a title at the top of the page such as "Questions for Bob Barker" and then make sure you leave enough space for your recipient to respond.