

Better Letter Writing Basics

There is basic format that is accepted when writing a letter. Business letters have a slightly different layout compared with more informal letters, however they are essentially the same. Remember that emails have their own unique format so be careful not to confuse it with the format for letters.

The letter format that is used is not unique to the English language. Some other major European languages follow a similar format, however there are slight differences.

Date – The date is always the first line (underneath the letterhead for a company letter) and is aligned with the right margin.

Receiver's Details – 2-3 lines below the date aligned with the left margin should be the contact details of the intended receiver, i.e. Title, address, phone, email ,etc.

Subject Line – This is usually omitted in an informal letter. In a business letter this line states the person the letter is intended for and the reason for the letter. Eg. Attn: John Coates, Sales Manager Re: Product Information Request

Opening Greeting – Use 'Dear' when writing both business and informal letters. If you do not know the name of the person you are writing to in a business letter use 'To whom it may concern,' or 'Dear Sir or Madam'.

Body – The body of letter should be written in short paragraphs in a business letter.

Closing Greeting – If you have used the opening 'Dear Sir or Madam' use the closing 'Yours faithfully'. Otherwise use the closing 'Yours Sincerely'. 'Kind regards' is another variation that you may encounter.

For examples of both informal and business letters visit the **Tips 'n' Tricks** section of the **Online Learning** section.

(U.K. English)

Word	Explanation	Translation
slightly	a little or small amount or degree	geringfügig
essentially	relating to the most important characteristics or ideas of something	wesentlich
underneath	under or below	unterhalb
margin	the empty space to the side of the text on a page, sometimes separated from the rest of the page by a vertical line	Rand
intended	planned	gedachte, geplante
omitted	to fail to or not include or do something	weglassen
paragraphs	a short part of a text, consisting of at least one sentence and beginning on a new line. It usually deals with a single event, description, idea, etc	Absatz