

How to write a formal letter

In formal letters, we often write to organizations (offices, colleges, businesses, etc.) or people we do not know very well.

We can write to ask for information, apply for a job, or make a complaint, etc.

Remember!

1 Layout

- Put your address at the top right of the page and the address of the person / company you are writing to on the left.
- Write the date under your address.
- Leave a line between the person's address and the greeting.
- Print your name under your signature.

2 Style and content

- Use formal language and phrases.
- Do not use contractions.

- Do not use colloquial language.
- Use the correct greeting and closing expressions.
- Give a clear reason for writing.
- Use linkers to connect your ideas.

Useful language

Greeting: Dear Mr / Ms (Lee), (if you know the name) / Dear Sir or Madam, (if you don't know the name)

Reason for writing: I am writing to apply for ... / request some information about ... / ask about ... / complain about ... / I saw your advertisement in ... / I read about ... / Regarding ...

Sequencing: Firstly, ... / Secondly, ... / Finally, ... / In conclusion, ...

Formal language: I would like to point out that ... / I would be grateful if you could ... / Could you possibly ...? / I am afraid I ...

Enclosures: I enclose my most recent CV / a stamped addressed envelope.

Finishing: I look forward to hearing from you. / Yours faithfully, (with Dear Sir or Madam) / Yours sincerely, (with Dear Mr /Ms (Lee))

Model question

You want to enter the competition 'Young Journalist of the Year'. Write to 'The Competitions Department' of 'Young News Magazine' to ask for more information.

Model answer

19 Briar Road
Southampton
Hampshire
15th November 2006

Competitions Department
Young News Magazine
118 High Street
Leeds

Dear Sir or Madam,

I read about the competition for 'Young Journalist of the Year' on your website and I am writing to ask for some more information.

Firstly, I would be grateful if you could tell me how long the article should be? Also, would it be acceptable for me to enter an article that has already been published? Secondly, could you let me know if I should send photographs with the article? Finally, could you please confirm the closing date of the competition?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

K.M.Newman
K.M.Newman

writer's address

date

address of company

greeting

reason for writing

sequencing, formal language

sequencing, formal language

sequencing, formal language

finishing

signature

print name