

Writing Letters

Introduction

People have exchanged letters since the dawn of humanity. Many different means/ tools and ways have been used. Letters were written in different occasions and they served multiple purposes; informing, inviting, requesting, documenting ...etc . the practice of correspondence developed throughout history. From writing on trees leaves, stones and animal skins, people developed to use cloth and paper. Nowadays, technology has greatly impacted human life and relations in general and provided human beings with new faster and more efficient means for communication. Still, letters, particularly formal ones, did not lose their position and roles; they are just adapted to new needs and new 'netiquette'.

Formal Letters

Formal letters are letters written to authorities or professional contacts. The addressee is neither a friend nor a relative, but one whom, in most contexts, we do not know and even if we know, our objective of writing is not personal. Formal letters are written for different purposes including requesting and giving information, applying for a job or a different position, asking for and granting permission, complaining and giving opinion /suggestions...etc. Whatever the purpose one is writing the letter for, all formal letters share the following characteristics.

- 1- The heading including; the senders' and the receiver's addresses;
- 2- A formal salutation,
- 3- An introduction that states the aim of writing the letter simply and clearly,
- 4- A body consisting of a number of paragraphs corresponding to the number of sub-themes to include. Each theme should be dealt with in a separate paragraph. The paragraph must have an effective topic sentence.
- 5- A conclusion that changes depending on the context of writing; summarizing, suggesting, reminding, noting...etc
- 6- An appropriate ending: **faithfully/ sincerely/ truly yours**
- 7- The writer full name

Letter's Style

Formal letters should be written in a formal language. The formal style is characterized by:

- 1- Complex sentences;
- 2- Advanced vocabulary,
- 3- Frequent use of the passive form,
- 4- No abbreviations, except those universally recognized; nor contracted forms;
- 5- No 'slang'; colloquial language,
- 6- Effective use of appropriate connectors.

Note: for more details: samples of formal letters for different purposes, tasks to practice..., go to reference 1 starting from page 81 to page 119. For self-correction and evaluation, refer to reference 2.