Writing Business Letters

A good business letter is brief, straightforward, and polite. If possible, it should be limited to one single-spaced typewritten page. Because it is so brief, a business letter is often judged on small, but important, things: format, grammar, punctuation, openings and closings. A business letter is not the place to try out fancy fonts or experimental writing styles.

Two Main Styles

- **Full block style**: Align all elements on the left margin.
- **Modified block style**: Down the middle of the page, align the return address, date, closing, signature, and typed name; align other elements on the left page margin.

Elements of a Standard Business Letter

- **Return Address**: Your address (or the address of the company you represent). If you are using preprinted stationery, there is no need to retype the information.
- **Date**: Leave two blank lines after the return address. Always spell out the month and include the day, a comma, and the year.
- **Inside Address**: Leave two blank lines after the date. Then type the address of the person or company to whom you are writing.
- **Salutation**: Type *Dear*, followed by the person’s name. End the line with a colon. If you don’t know the name of the person, use a title instead (i.e., *Dear Editor, Dear Madam*).
- **Body**: Align your message on the left margin. Skip a line before starting a new paragraph, but do not indent the paragraph’s first line. Make sure that each paragraph is clear and concise.
- **Closing**: Leave two lines of space after your last body paragraph, then use a conventional closing, followed by a comma (i.e., *Sincerely*, *Sincerely Yours*, *Respectfully*).
- **Signature**: Your signature should appear below your closing. Unless you have established a personal relationship with the person you are writing, use both your first and last name.
- **Name and Position**: Four lines after the closing, type your full name. Do not include a title (*Mr. or Mrs.*). If you are writing on behalf of an organization, type your title on the next line.
- **Abbreviations at the end of a letter**: If you send a copy of a letter to someone other than the person addressed, use *cc:* and the person’s name. Use *Enc. or Enclosure* if you enclose something with the letter. If someone else types it, put the writer’s initials in capitals, then a slash and the typist’s initials in lowercase: *MT/fjr*. Just one abbreviation should appear on a line.

Sample Business Letter (Full Block Style)
May 26, 2002

The Tiny Tots Toy Company
15456 Pyramid Way Inside
College Park, FL 33133

Dear Customer Service Representative:

I recently purchased one of your Tiny Tents (Model #47485) for my three-year old. Unfortunately, after viewing the components that came with the product, I discovered that four of the parts were missing. Also, the instructions that came with the tent are in Portuguese and Russian, but not in English or French, the two languages I speak. These two unforeseen problems have resulted in the tent remaining unassembled and unacceptable as a toy for my daughter.

I am writing to request replacements for the missing parts, and a copy of the full set of assembly instructions (in English or French) for the model I purchased. If reasonable arrangements are not made within ten business days, I will return the tent to the store I purchased it from and expect a full refund. To assist you in processing my request, I am including a copy of my sales receipt and a list of the missing parts.

I have purchased other toys manufactured by your company in the past, and have always been impressed with the quality and selection that Tiny Tots has made available to its customers. I sincerely hope this is a one-time incident, and that any future purchases I make will live up to the standard my family has come to expect from your company.

Sincerely,

Clara Winters

Enc: 2