

## Rules for Writing Formal Letters in English

In English there are a number of conventions that should be used when writing a formal or business letter. Furthermore, you try to write as simply and as clearly as possible, and not to make the letter longer than necessary. Remember not to use informal language like contractions.

### Addresses:

#### 1) Your Address

The return address should be written in the top right-hand corner of the letter.

#### 2) The Address of the person you are writing to

The inside address should be written on the left, starting below your address.

### Date:

Different people put the date on different sides of the page. You can write this on the right or the left on the line after the address you are writing to. Write the month as a word.

### Salutation or greeting:

#### 1) Dear Sir or Madam,

If you do not know the name of the person you are writing to, use this. It is always advisable to try to find out a name.

#### 2) Dear Mr Jenkins,

If you know the name, use the title (Mr, Mrs, Miss or Ms, Dr, etc.) and the surname only. If you are writing to a woman and do not know if she uses Mrs or Miss, you can use Ms, which is for married and single women.

### Ending a letter:

#### 1) Yours faithfully

If you do not know the name of the person, end the letter this way.

#### 2) Yours sincerely

If you know the name of the person, end the letter this way.

#### 3) Your signature

Sign your name, then print it underneath the signature. If you think the person you are writing to might not know whether you are male or female, put your title in brackets after your name.

## Content of a Formal Letter

### First paragraph

The first paragraph should be short and state the purpose of the letter- to make an enquiry, complain, request something, etc.

The paragraph or paragraphs in the middle of the letter should contain the relevant information behind the writing of the letter. Most letters in English are not very long, so keep the information to the essentials and concentrate on organising it in a clear and logical manner rather than expanding too much.

### Last Paragraph

The last paragraph of a formal letter should state what action you expect the recipient to take- to refund, send you information, etc.

## Abbreviations Used in Letter Writing

The following abbreviations are widely used in letters:

- **asap** = as soon as possible
- **cc** = carbon copy (when you send a copy of a letter to more than one person, you use this abbreviation to let them know)
- **enc.** = enclosure (when you include other papers with your letter)
- **pp** = per procuracionem (A Latin phrase meaning that you are signing the letter on somebody else's behalf; if they are not there to sign it themselves, etc)
- **ps** = postscript (when you want to add something after you've finished and signed it)
- **pto (*informal*)** = please turn over (to make sure that the other person knows the letter continues on the other side of the page)
- **RSVP** = please reply

## Outline: A Covering Letter

A covering letter is the one that accompanies your CV when you are applying for a job. Here is a fairly conventional plan for the layout of the paragraphs.

### Opening Paragraph

Briefly identify yourself and the position you are applying for. Add how you found out about the vacancy.

### Paragraph 2

Give the reasons why you are interested in working for the company and why you wish to be considered for that particular post. State your relevant qualifications and experience, as well as your personal qualities that make you a suitable candidate.

**Paragraph 3**

Inform them that you have enclosed your current CV and add any further information that you think could help your case.

**Closing Paragraph**

Give your availability for interview, thank them for their consideration, restate your interest and close the letter.

**Outline: A Letter of Enquiry**

A letter of enquiry is when you are approaching a company speculatively, that is you are making an approach without their having advertised or announced a vacancy.

**Opening Paragraph**

Introduce yourself briefly and give your reason for writing. Let them know of the kind of position you are seeking, why you are interested and how you heard about them.

**Paragraph 2**

Show why their company in particular interests you, mention your qualifications and experience along with any further details that might make them interested in seeing you.

**Paragraph 3**

Refer to your enclosed CV and draw their attention to any particularly important points you would like them to focus on in it.

**Closing Paragraph**

Thank them, explain your availability for interview and restate your enthusiasm for their company and desire to be considered for posts that might as yet be unavailable.

Carme Simó  
Dr. Gimbernat, 1  
24673 Cambrils

4 may 2003

Hotel Les Palmeres  
Passeig La Marina  
1057 Benidorm

Dear Sirs,

I would like to apply for the post of receptionist in your hotel advertised in today's issue of El País.

My name is Carme Simó. I am twenty years of age and I have just finished the Secretary studies, though I have some experience as a receptionist in a hotel in Cambrils where I have been working for two summers. I also speak English and French fluently and some German.

I am enclosing my C.V with my fully detailed qualifications and experience which I hope will suit you.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Carme Simó



# Request

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Sarah Jameson  
29 Some Street  
Anytown

20 April 2001

Natwest Bank PLC  
12 Cash Lane  
Bridgetown  
BT2 4WE

Dear Sirs,

Further to our telephone conversation yesterday, this is to confirm that I have had problems using the above card. As requested, I am therefore writing a formal letter asking for a new card to be issued.

I would be grateful if the new card could be sent to me urgently as I need to be able to make a cash withdrawal and buy several things by the weekend.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours,

S.Jameson



# Inquiry

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I.E.S Joan Guinjoan (class 2  
Bat)  
Eduard Toda, 5  
43771 Riudoms  
Spain

12th May 2005

Ms GlendaMarks  
Johnsonville House of Travel  
235 Glenview Road  
JOHNSONVILLE

Dear Ms Marks

We would be very grateful if you would be able to send us a selection of travel brochures about Queensland Australia.

Our class is researching the tourist attractions of Queensland as a social studies project. We know that these brochures would be very useful as part of our presentation to parents and other classes at the school.

Thank you for considering our request. We are happy to pay for any postage and have enclosed a stamped addressed envelope.

Yours faithfully,

Fèlix Freixe